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[LOVE'S BLIGHT.]

## FICKLE FORTUNE.

By the Author of "Maurice Durant," etc.

### CHAPTER XI.

Now let the stricken deer go weep,  
The hart ungalled play;  
For some must watch while others sleep,  
So runs the world away. *Hamlet.*

"BELLA, why did you send for me?"  
The speaker was Captain Reginald Dartmouth. The person to whom he spoke was a lady, by name Bella Mervin, by profession chief ballet dancer at the Royal Signet Theatre, by nature what the reader shall discover for himself.

The scene was a drawing-room in Carlton Square. Captain Dartmouth had just entered, clad in travelling suit, and carrying his hat in his hand.

Miss Mervin was seated or rather lying upon the blue satin couch—blue became her soft blonde complexion, satin she preferred to any other material, for obvious reasons.

She rose to meet him with a suppressed cry, half of surprise, half of love—yes, love, for Bella Mervin, the danseuse of the Royal Signet, loved Captain Reginald Dartmouth, and, for a miracle, the handsome captain loved her in return.

"Reginald!" she cried, springing towards him as only a ballet dancer, nay, only she could spring, and drawing his face down to her slightly flushed and very beautiful one. "Reginald! You have come at once! How good of you!"

"I don't know that, Bella. Put foolish instead of good and you will be nearer the mark."

"Not foolish but good, I say again," she repeated. "But come and sit down; you must be tired. How cold your hand is. Françoise shall bring you some chocolate. I am only just up."

And, after helping him off with his damp coat, which she flung with reckless negligence upon one of the satin fauteuils, she touched a small silver-gilt spring bell.

"Chocolate, Françoise," she said to the French maid

who appeared, and then, poking the fire till the blaze shot up cheerfully, drew up an armchair towards it.

"Now come and sit here, Reginald, and rest awhile," she said, bringing forward a dainty little footstool as an additional comfort.

The captain watched all these preparations for his comfort with an air of listless proprietorship, then settled down into the chair and drew the girl on to his knee.

"Now, Bella," he said, "perhaps you will answer my question."

"No, I will not," she replied, stroking his hand and looking at him with an arch impudence and an admiring expression in her blue eyes. "Not a word of explanation until you have had your chocolate, then, lying on the couch yonder with a cigar in your mouth, and your little Bella at your feet, you shall hear what I like to tell you."

He nodded.  
"So be it," he said, raising his eyebrows and smiling the smile only this girl saw. "But I warn you that your story must not take long in the telling, Bella mine. I start by the night coach."

"No, no!" she exclaimed, with a look of entreaty, clasping her hands. "Don't leave me so soon, Reginald. Don't—oh, don't!"

He was touched by the plaintive voice and by the sudden tears that sprang to her eyes.

Captain Reginald was not a "caressing man," as a poetess has it, but he drew the golden head to his breast.

"Bella," he said, in his grave tone, "you ruin me." She drew herself away with a quick start and paled.

"I ruin you!" she said. "Reginald!"

"Ay," he said, "you melt me when I should be as ice; you soften me when I should be hard as iron; you—Ah, Bella, Bella! where's the chocolate?"

She was used to his strange manners, and reached the chocolate, which was served in an antique cup, worth a matter of fifty guineas, without a word.

He sipped the aromatic beverage for a minute or two in silence, looking at the dancing fire flame and smoothing the little white hand that lay in his

Bella was content and waited.

"Another cup?"

He shook his head.

"Do," she entreated.

"No," he said, "no more. And now, Bella, again, why did you send for me?"

"Why did you go?" she asked him, by way of reply. "Why did you go so suddenly, so—so cruelly?"

He raised his eyebrows.

"Suddenly! cruelly! Do you expect me to give you six months' notice of every journey I intend taking? Is it cruel to run into the country for a day or two? Be reasonable, Bella, and answer my question. Why did you write for me?"

"I wanted to see you," she murmured, half fearfully, and creeping closer as if by a caress to turn the edge of his anger aside.

His eyes grew colder and his voice was sterner as he said:

"Bella, let me tell you a story. Three years ago a small crowd of Parisian idlers and vagabonds were gathered round a girl who was dancing with a tambourine on the boulevards. A gentleman, an Englishman, stopped in his idle lounge to look on. After the dance the girl handed round her tambourine for the sous. One vagabond offered her a napoleon for a kiss. She refused. He insisted on the barter with roughness and caught her in his arms. The girl shrieked, and the Englishman, a lazy fellow, interfered. The vagabond picked himself from the pavement and the two, girl and Englishman, went off.

"In gratitude she told him her story—what she knew of it, which was little. She was English, but where born and whence she came she knew not. Have I said she was beautiful? She was—so beautiful that the Englishman fell in love, and she returned the compliment. Can you guess the rest? They made a solemn pact. It was this: they were to love each other all through life and after death—that as a matter of course—but there were to be no ties. Like two streams they were to scamper down the mountain of life, but when either chose they were to



be free to separate and change their channel. Yes, the man would not sacrifice his life for love, nor would he let the girl. It was a fair, an equitable pact, and it was solemnly made.

"The girl came to London and, helped by the man, won fame and wealth. She shone like a sun upon that hydra-headed monster, the public, and it welcomed and worshipped her.

"The man killed on, doing nothing. But the time came when he thought and acted. He loved still, but he dared not—may, would not, for he would dare all that man may dare—he would not break his vow, and the pact was kept.

"Henceforth the streams divide—one shines on lit by wealth, fame, and the public favour; the other must struggle o'er the stones and through the rocks into an ocean of success. Bella, you were the girl, I was the man. Our pact must be kept," and he looked down into her eyes and her white face with a smile stern and set.

The girl hid her face from it and shuddered.

"Reginald," she said, so hoarsely that he had to bend his head to hear her, "Reginald, you will kill me!" He shook his head.

"No, Bella, women do not die of broken hearts, whatever men may do. Still were it so the pact must be kept, and you know it."

She moaned like a wounded stag and lifted her pale face again.

"I know it," she breathed, "I know it, and you—you would kill me before your eyes if I stood in your way. I know it."

"I should," he said, and his face became grand with the intensity of firmness. "I should. Between us who have loved and love, for you know I love you, there can be no deceit. Our eyes can look through its mask, our hearts can wear none. Three years ago I offered you my love—no weak, filmy bauble, but love—under these conditions. You would have taken it with worse gladly, thoughtlessly. I set before you as one dealing with life and death the certain future when the break would come. You took it still with wide-opened eyes, with entire knowledge of the consequences. The break has come. We keep the pact. We part, loving still, mark, but saying farewell for ever."

She was calm, unnaturally calm now, white to the very lips, and short of breath, but calm. In her eyes was the look of the leopards when she feels the life-blood oozing from the mortal wound. In her heart was a resolution born of despair—despair, for from the sentence that had fallen from the lips above her she knew there was no escape, no appeal.

"You love me still?" she asked, laying her hands upon her heart, clasped till the diamonds on them cut the interlaced fingers. "You love me still?"

"You know it," he replied, meeting her gaze with clear, unshrinking eyes.

"I know it," she said, as if in answer to a last doubt. "You would not speak falsely to me. You love me still, and that must be my consolation. I will hug it to my bosom like a dove. Reginald, you did not complete your story. You said nothing of the care and love you lavished on the dancing-girl. You said nothing of the weary toil you bestowed upon her. You said nothing of the labour which, with a willing heart, you underwent to polish the rough pebble and make it worthy of a place in your hand. For I am but a pebble, polished though I am, to be flung aside, even as you fling me now, Reginald. Of all this you said nothing. It was left for me to say. I tell you that though I, who lay here for the last time, am still in outward form that despised thing, a ballet girl—within"—and she struck her white bosom with both her clenched hands—"I have a soul attuned, by yourself, to your own. You smile, you would smile if I lay in my coffin, Reginald, for your heart is adamant, immovable. I give you proof of what I say. 'The streams must separate,' say you; 'They shall,' say I. You go through rock to fortune, and the object you have set yourself—Heaven knows what it be, I don't even ask. I stop, and, scorning the life you will not render bearable by your love, fall into the silent pool whose name is Death."

As solemn, almost as stern as his, her voice breathed out the threat—for such it was.

His face changed not a whit. Cold, composed and calm it turned to hers.

"Bella, you speak the truth as you think, but you err. I know, and, knowing, am convinced that you lack the courage. Death is a poet's word and easy to rhyme. To realise it by one's own hand—by one so small, so white, so weak as this—is difficult—nay, 'tis impossible."

Her eyes lit up with a flash of scorn for one moment, then relapsed into the old awful look.

"Comfort yourself with that then," she said, "and go your way."

"I will," he replied, "I will—a stormy, dangerous way, Bella, on which you could not go, at least by my side, and I know no other place would satisfy you. I

go my way to success or— You go yours, easy, pleasant and certain of an end. In both our hearts the barb remains; pluck out yours, as I with might and main shall have to pluck out mine."

She shook her head and silently rose from her position.

He took out his watch and looked at it with a sharp, calculating glance, then raised his eyes to where she stood leaning against the mantel, white still, but as resolute as himself.

Something in the turn of her lips kept him silent for a few minutes. He was suffering like herself and could not trust himself to speak.

Presently he rose and looked round for his coat. Putting it on and holding his hat in his hand, he walked up to her.

She raised her eyes, clear, bright blue eyes, calm as his own.

"You are going?" she said, in a low, deadened voice.

"Yes," he said.

"For ever?" she asked.

"For ever," he replied, solemnly.

She drew near to him and held up her face as she had held it up a score of times.

"One kiss—the last."

His lips quivered, for the first time, but the well-trained face did not otherwise betray him.

He bent his head.

With a low cry of inexpressible agony she threw her arms round his neck, devouring every inch of his face with her greedy eyes, and caressing his neck with her poor, fond fingers.

Then as he gently but firmly unclasped them and withdrew from her embrace she turned and stood upright, with her eyes fixed upon him as he walked towards the door.

As it closed behind him she seemed to wake from the stupor of despair and with a low cry sank into the chair.

As she did so a sealed packet lying on the table caught her eye.

Anything, the slightest morsel pertaining to him was precious to her. She caught at it and tore it open. A score of bank-notes fell fluttering to the floor.

She gazed at them and turned the envelope over. Not a word. Simply the money.

"Oh, cruel, cruel!" she cried, flinging herself down upon them and rocking herself in the agony of her grief. "Oh, cruel, cruel!"

Thus she lay for five minutes, then she sprang up and went to one of the small cabinets. The wild outburst of grief had been supplanted by the old unnatural calm.

The notes lay on the ground; she trampled on them as she returned from the cabinet with a small phial in her hand.

Some chocolate remained in the cup. With a low cry of half-mad delight she caught it up.

His lips had touched it. Even in death she should share with him.

Quickly, as if to give herself no time for hesitation, she emptied the phial into the cup and raised it to her lips.

"The pact is kept," she cried, and drained the draught to the dregs.

One moment more and the costly toy fell with a dull crash upon the Turkey carpet. Another and the more precious human toy had followed it.

Forsaken and destroyed they lay side by side, to be thrown with all other broken china and broken lives to the dust whence they came.

And the destroyer? Relentless, un pitying, even to himself, he had gone on his way.

Woe be to those whose fate may cast them across his path, for he who had no mercy for himself can have none for them.

## CHAPTER XII.

Fear is the last of ills.

In time we hate that which we often fear.

Antony and Cleopatra.

CAPTAIN DARTMOUTH returned to the Dale much sooner than he was expected. Both the squire and Grace were astonished to see him. They were just sitting down to dinner when he entered in his cool, languid way and gave them good-evening.

"Hullo!" said the squire, "back already, Reginald! You soon got your business over."

"Yes, sir," was the reply, "very quickly. It was an affair of a very few minutes," and he smiled grimly as he thought of the broken heart he had left and the dull, dead pain in his own.

"Well, I'm glad to see you back. Grace and I were missing you—weren't we, Grace?"

"No, I was not," said Grace, coolly. "Shall we put the fowls back?—they'll be spoilt."

"Don't ruin them for me," said the captain, taking the rather uncivil remark with his usual indifferent politeness. "I have had half a dinner and will finish the rest when I come down. Pray go on, sir."

"All right," said the squire, "I'll tell James to keep the mutton down until you come," and, turning to the butler, he gave the order.

Reginald Dartmouth was not long exchanging his travelling suit for an evening one, and sauntered into the room again in a few minutes as carefully dressed as usual, and looking, if anything, rather more serene and careless.

"Have some fowl, or some mutton?" said Grace. He would have fowl, he said, and she cut him a wing.

"Well," said the squire, "you don't look any the worse for your flying journey. Here's to your health!" and in the old-fashioned way he lifted his glass with a bow.

"No," said Reginald, bowing also. "I don't feel any worse either. Any news, sir?"

"None, save that Grace has thrown the pony," said the squire, and he looked over with a shake of the head at the culprit.

"Is that all?" said Reginald, significantly. "Is that the only piece of mischief, Miss Grace?"

"Yes, that is all," she retorted. "And pray what mischief have you been doing since you have been away?"

He smiled, almost sweetly.

"Mischief!" he repeated. "None. I have been seeing to some business that ought to have been got through long ago, Miss Grace. And so you've thrown the pony. Is he hurt seriously?"

"No," said the squire, "I don't think so."

"I must look at him to-morrow," said Reginald, and he held his plate for some mutton.

The pain at his heart was as bad and as intense as ever, but he could eat. Some men, especially those of Reginald Dartmouth's calibre, could enjoy their dinner if they were to be hanged ten minutes after.

After dinner he lit a cigar and strolled out upon the terrace.

The moon was just creeping above the trees. Grace was in the drawing-room, the squire in the easy-chair, drifting through the land of dreams.

Reginald knew that he should be in the drawing-room, but for the moment he felt unequal to bearing the rough, uncultivated rudeness—for it was little else—of the girl he had set himself to marry. His heart was too full of the memory of the pleading voice and sorrowful eyes he had left behind him for ever more, and he gave way to the only weakness he had ever felt in his life, and, leaning over the terrace, gazed at the cloud of smoke and continued to harden his heart.

While he was in this position a footstep sounded behind him, and, turning, he saw Grace.

"Well, Miss Grace," said he; "coming to look at the moon?"

"Yes," she said, "and at you."

He lifted his soft felt hat with a meek bow.

"That is very like a compliment."

"Is it?" she retorted. "Then it's very unlike what I meant it for. I meant that I had come out here to look at you because I was tired of looking at everything in the drawing-room."

"I am sorry I am not more interesting even than I am," he said, with his dark smile, turning to look at her as she leant against the balcony, her chin resting on her clasped hands and her young, graceful figure thrown out plainly against the patch of moonlight—youth and graceful, but how different, how darkly, roughly different to the fair-haired, blue-eyed woman he had loved and forsaken!

Bad men have their soft and painful moments—this was one for Captain Reginald Dartmouth.

"What are you thinking of?" he asked, after he had made the mental comparison and determined to disregard the tender feeling it produced. "Are you wondering who lives in the moon, Miss Grace?"

"No. I was wondering where you had been and what you were doing in London," she replied, without turning her head.

He half started and wholly frowned.

This was the second time she had been inquisitive concerning his visit to town.

"It would not interest you if I were to tell you," he said. "I have been up on business, troublesome business, that is all."

"You don't look as if it had troubled you much," she said, in her curt, candid way, and she turned her head to look at him. "No," she said, scanning his face and knitting her heavy brows, "not a bit. But I don't believe anything would trouble you. Did you cry when your mother died?"

He raised his eyebrows.

"Yes," he said.

"You did?" said Grace, with grave astonishment.

"Then you must have loved her. Did you ever love any one else that died?"

He turned to her half savagely, but instantly regained his composure and usual serenity as he answered:

"Come, you are inquisitive to-night, Miss Grace."



Did I ever love any one else who died? Oh, yes—a cat. I loved her very much, and she died. I remember I had to drown her because she had a bad habit of mewing at awkward moments."

Grace looked at him with doubting scrutiny.

"Ah," said she, "you're having fun at me as usual. I don't know when I like you worst, when you tell stories like that or when you are speaking the truth and scolding me."

"Oh," he said; "and pray when do you like me best?" and he knocked the ash off his cigar, and, leaning one arm on the balcony, turned his face towards her.

It was a handsome face—beautiful enough with manly grace and regularity to ensnare any woman. It did not move the rough, untutored girl before him.

"Never!" she replied, with a quiet glance of earnestness, "and I never shall."

"Don't be too sure, my girl," he said, with his unmovable smile of quiet superiority.

"I can't be too sure," she replied, yawning and turning from the terrace.

He uttered a laugh, musical and low, and looked round at her, then turned away to the right with a dark shadow upon his brow.

Presently she came back, so quietly that he did not hear her, and stood at his side for a moment.

"Well?" he said.

"Good-night," she said. "I am going to bed."

"Oh, you are polite enough to say that, are you?" he said, turning his eyes down on her.

"No," she said, candidly. "But Uncle Harry told me I was to do so, and I've done it."

"Good-night," he said, holding out his hand; "and pleasant dreams."

She touched his long white fingers with her own small brown ones, and bounded off the terrace, leaving him there to think and plot.

In the morning the squire sent down word from his bedroom that his gout was too bad to allow of his breakfasting with them.

And Grace and Captain Dartmouth took their meal alone.

Directly it was over the captain put on his hat and went round the farm, as he had done before his visit to town.

The men were glad to see him, and hung about waiting for his orders. Already they looked upon him as their master when the squire was away.

One of them stepped up to ask him about some young pigs that he had recommended to be removed.

"The squire said as how they was to be left till you come back, capt'n," he said, touching his forehead. "And so I left 'em."

The captain nodded.

"Send them to the market," he said, "and tell me what they fetch."

Then he walked over to the barn.

There was some storing to be done, and the men were waiting for the squire to look at the wheat.

Captain Reginald stepped into the barn and looked round.

"What are you waiting for, my men?"

"For the squire, sur," was the reply.

"Oh," said Reginald; "ten, twenty, thirty," checking the loads. "The squire is bad this morning. You can go on, Giles."

The men touched their caps and set about their work, and he stood long enough to see them in swing and went to the stables.

There he was already more master than the squire himself.

The grooms ran out and fussed about, and the pony was led into the yard.

"A mere scratch," said the captain, looking at the cut knee. "Put the lotion on and turn it into the paddock. John, how's the chestnut?"

"All right, sir," said the groom, hurrying to the stall, and bringing the captain's horse out.

"Ah," said he, stroking its neck. "Did you walk it over the moor yesterday?"

"No, sir," said the groom.

The captain frowned.

"Why not?" he asked.

"Miss Grace had him saddled for her, sir," said the groom. "I told her as you mightn't like it, captain, but she said as she would come and saddle it herself, and so we was obliged."

The captain nodded.

"Get him ready for me in an hour," he said, and turned towards the house.

When he arrived there he found the squire was down, looking gouty and irritable.

"Good-morning, sir," said the captain, lounging in. "Is the foot bad?"

"Yes," said Mr. Darrell. "Dencod, bad—been awake all night with the pain."

"Why did you get up so soon?" said the captain, sitting down and poking the fire.

"Bliged to," replied the squire. "The men are

waiting for me to go on storing, and there's the pigs—to-day's market day. I'm bliged to be down among 'em this morning or they won't be at it."

Reginald stroked his moustache.

"I don't see the necessity," he said. "I have just been round the farm. The men are hard at it in the barn, and the pigs are on their way, as the nursery rhyme says, to market."

The squire looked up aghast.

"Why, the stacks ain't checked?" he exclaimed.

"Yes," said Reginald. "I counted them."

"You did. Come, that's very kind of you, my boy," said the squire. "You've saved me a painful tramp down the yard. And everything's all right, eh?"

"Everything," said the captain, "I have seen to it myself."

"Thank ye, thank ye," said the squire, with a groan of pain. "Pon my word I'm getting a good opinion of you London gentlemen. I allers thought you were an idle set of do-nothings, but I was mistaken I see. Thank ye, thank ye."

"Don't mention it," said Reginald Dartmouth.

"No thanks are due, I'm only amusing myself."

"Pretty profitable amusement for me," said the squire, then added, abruptly: "Where's Grace?"

"Here, Uncle Harry," she answered for herself, coming in at the door with a basin of broth. "Here's a cup of beefstea Mrs. Lucas has been making; I thought I'd bring it up myself as I was coming."

The squire looked grateful.

"You're both of you very kind," he groaned. "Here's Reginald been all over the farm for me and got the men going."

"Has he?" said Grace, without looking round.

"Well, it's time he did something useful; he's been playing at doing nothing all his life."

The squire laughed.

"Now, Miss Saucy! Reginald, just hand me that paper, will you?"

The captain gave him the paper, which had only just arrived, and turned to Grace.

"I have seen the pony," he said; "it is nothing but a mere scratch, and will be right again directly."

"Oh, I am so glad!" she exclaimed, looking round at him with a flash of genuine pleasure. "Poor fellow! he did try to clear the gate so hard!"

The squire growled.

"Reginald," he said, "I wish you'd give an eye to the young puss. I don't mind the pony, but I'd be sorry for her to break her own neck."

The captain smiled, and with a glance at Grace he replied, laughingly:

"You must remember she was not under my charge then; she is safe enough when she is. By the way, I must ride over to the Warren this morning. I have a message for Miss Goodman. By Jove, I'd nearly forgotten it."

"Going to Rebecca's?" said the squire. "Who gave you the message?"

"A cousin of hers, Charles Anderson," said the captain, looking at his watch. "I think I'll go now. Can I persuade you to keep me company, Miss Grace?"

Grace looked at her uncle.

"Shall I go and see Rebecca?" she said.

So seldom had she asked his advice or permission that the squire was rather astonished.

"Yes, certainly," he said. "Go with your cousin, and tell Rebecca I've got this abominable gout agin' or I'd have come too. Ugh! You don't know what it is yet I suppose, Reginald?"

"No, sir, not yet," said he, as he left the room, "but it'll come in time, I don't doubt. It's in the family, you know."

"Ay, confound it, and always will be!" grunted the squire.

"So you tried the chestnut yesterday?" said Reginald, as he and Grace cantered across the fields.

"Yes," she said, unhesitatingly. "I wanted to see if he'd throw me. He didn't."

"He is a gentleman and could not be so rude to a lady," said the captain. "Do you like him?"

"Yes," said Grace, "very much. He's a beauty. He's faster than this," and she patted the old cob's neck with a sigh.

"You think so?" said the captain, with a smile. "Well, I will exchange with you."

She looked at him sharply, and shook her head. He had expected an eager acceptance.

"No?" he said. "What has the chestnut done to offend you, or have you grown fond of the cob?"

She looked straight before her without answering. She did not care to acknowledge the love—if love it was—that she possessed for anything that belonged to the dead Hugh.

The captain glanced at her rather curiously.

"So you will not have the chestnut?" he repeated.

"No, thank you," she said, and spurred the cob.

The captain took the hint and pricked the chestnut into a trot to keep up with her.

They rode on in silence and reached Ashleigh

House, or the Warren as it was more often called.

Rebecca was in and welcomed them in her timid, gentle way.

Grace, after taking the kiss on her forehead, marched to the window and stared at the lawn.

The captain, hat in hand, seated himself.

"I am here in the capacity of messenger, Miss Goodman," he said, in his soft, slow voice.

Rebecca looked surprised and expectant.

"I bring a host of good wishes and kind remembrances from Sir Charles Anderson."

Rebecca blushed, for no reason whatever.

"Oh, Charlie," she said, "have you seen him? Is he well?"

"Yes," said the captain. "I met him in the park during a short visit to London I made a few days back. He was looking well and commissioned me to ride over and take his good wishes."

"It was very kind," said Rebecca. "I have not seen him for—oh, a long while. Quite long enough for him to have forgotten me."

"Not quite it is evident," said the captain, gallantly.

"And who is Lord Anderson?" asked Grace, turning from the window with her usual abruptness.

Rebecca started.

"Not lord—only sir, Grace, dear," she said. "He is my cousin, and a very good young fellow."

"Young?" said Grace.

"Well," said Rebecca, with a blush. "He is a year or two younger than I am. I am thirty-one next birthday, and Charlie is twenty-eight."

"Old I call him," said Grace, emphatically.

And the captain smiled behind his moustache grimly.

Gentle-hearted Rebecca took it in good part.

"Old to you, my dear, but very juvenile he seems to me. Two years make all the difference when they are on the wrong side," she said, turning to the captain again.

"Wrong side!" he repeated, with a deprecating elevation of the eyebrows. "I must look younger than I am or you would not have said that, Miss Goodman. I am thirty."

Grace swore round sharply to the lawn again.

"Thirty is young for a man," said Rebecca. "But very old for a woman."

"I cannot agree with you," said the captain, seriously, and glancing Grace-wards with a sinister look—"Before thirty a woman is but a child, wayward, untutored—Ah, I forgot, Miss Grace is within hearing."

And, with a smile, he rose and held out his hand.

"We must be going. The squire has been attacked by his old enemy, the gout, and Grace and I are to hurry back and help him rout it."

Rebecca rose and gave him her hand.

But Grace did not move.

He looked over to her, and Rebecca stood waiting.

"Come, Miss Grace, are you ready?" asked the captain, serenely.

"No," she said, without turning from the window. "I shan't go. I shall stay with Rebecca."

The captain raised his eyebrows and smiled.

"Very well," he said. "Take care how you come across the fence; and with his indolent yet well-bred bow left the room."

Rebecca watched him get into the saddle and ride off.

Grace, hearing the horse's retreating hoofs, came to the table and threw her gloves and riding-whip upon it, then stood looking at them with her brows bent darkly and her lips set close.

Rebecca, used to her moods, went up to her and commenced taking off her veil.

Grace snatched at the hat and flung it on the table.

"Oh, my dear!" said Rebecca. "What has made you so angry?"

"He has," replied Grace, coolly. "I hate him."

Rebecca this time did not reprove her.

Perhaps she felt rather touched with the same complaint.

It was scarcely likely that she should care for any one who usurped Hugh Darrell's place, and she had been prepared, in her timid way, to hate, or at least shun Grace.

But the girl seemed so utterly unconscious, so entirely indifferent to her elevation that she could not shun her—much less hate her; nay, more, if the truth was to be told, she had grown to love her.

But for Captain Reginald Dartmouth the mistress of the Warren had not only dislike but, what was more, distrust.

She was an innocent, timid woman, but her love made her sharp—sharp, not in her own interests, but in poor, outcast Hugh's, and her quickened sense told her that the dark, indolent, well-bred Captain Reginald meant no good to Hugh Darrell, the rightful heir, nor to Grace Darrell, the substitute.

"You hate him!" she said. "Why, Grace, he seems very kind to you."

"That's it!" said Grace.

Then suddenly her face changed, and, throwing herself on her knees beside the quiet figure, she buried her face on Rebecca's knees, and said, in a voice utterly different to the defiant one that had spoken but a moment since:

"Rebecca, Rebecca, I'm afraid of him. I try—I try hard not to be, but—I'm afraid of him!"

And she shuddered as if the cold hand of some strange dread had touched her soul.

#### CHAPTER XIII.

Seems he a dove? his features are but borrowed,  
For he's disposed as the evil raven.  
Is he a lamb? his skin is surely lent him,  
For he's inclined as are the ravenous wolves  
Who cannot steal a shape.

DINNER was over, and the tea was waiting on the drawing-room table before Grace came home.

The squire was seated on a chair beside the fire, looking irritable and tired. There was a sad and weary look upon his face, born of something more than the gout.

Captain Reginald was lying on the sofa, as still and motionless as a clay figure.

Grace threw open the door and entered the room in her riding-habit.

"Where have you been?" asked the squire, frately, turning round in his chair and staring at her flushed face and dishevelled hair.

"Hasn't he told you?" retorted Grace, jerking her whip at the recumbent captain.

"If you mean me by that emphatic gesture," he said, with slow indolence, "I have informed your uncle of your stay at the Warren."

Grace nodded and walked to the table.

"That's it, unky," she said. "I've been to the Warren. I didn't mean to stay so late, but—"

She looked at the still figure on the sofa and paused.

"But what?" growled the squire. "I won't have you staying away from the Dale till this time o' night. Why didn't you come home with Reginald?"

"Because," said Grace, "I didn't choo—I mean—There, unky, don't be cross. I'm quite safe and pretty warm, I can tell you. Rebecca wanted to send me home in the pony chaise, but I gave her the slip, got into the stables, and scampered off on the coblike lightning. I haven't been more than ten minutes coming the whole way," and, throwing her bright hair off her face with a quick jerk of her head, she turned to leave the room.

"It will be much more than ten before we get our cup of tea," said Reginald, slowly, and the girl's face fell again into its old defiant look.

"No, it won't," she said, "for I'll pour it out before I go upstairs."

"No, no," said the squire, testily. "I hate my tea in all this confusion. I'd rather wait. Go upstairs and get that confounded habit off, and pour out the tea properly."

Grace picked up her whip, which she had laid down, and left the room, the squire growling with pain and annoyance.

She was not long gone, and the flush of health and excitement produced by the rapid gallop was still on her cheek as she took her seat at the urn.

"And how was Rebecca?" said the squire. "Just as quiet and mopish as usual I suppose?"

When people are getting old and are somewhat miserable they have a knack of fancying every one else either too gay or "mopish."

"No," said Grace, "she wasn't mopish. She never is. She sang and played, and I listened. We had a happy time of it, I can tell you."

"Ah!" said the squire. "I suppose you worried her life out—it's a wonder if you didn't."

"Is it?" said Grace. "Come, I never worried you, unky."

"Haven't you?" said the squire. "I should like to know what you call this afternoon's behaviour."

"I didn't mean it to worry you, unky," said the girl.

"And I never allow myself to be worried," said Reginald from the sofa, with quiet distinctness.

Grace half turned with flashing eyes, but the retort died on her lips before the calm power of his smile.

"Draw that light a little off my eyes, Grace," said the squire. "I'm growing blind as well as useless," he growled. "My eyes are smarting like fire. To-day's the only day as I haven't been able to read the paper."

"Not read the paper!" said Grace, lifting her brows. "Poor unky. Here, where is it? I'll read something to you."

She had often read him short scraps and paragraphs before Reginald had come. This was the first evening she had offered to do so since his arrival.

"Ay, do," said the squire, and Grace, glancing at

the still figure on the sofa and seeing its eyes shut, flung herself down in an easy-chair and took up the paper.

She lost two or three minutes in settling, dragging the lamp close to her elbow, much to the squire's annoyance, and clearing her throat. Then she picked out little paragraphs, accidents, murders, elopements, etc., and read them, stumbling a little at the hard words, but running over the little ones with a voice that, if not thoroughly refined, was deliciously musical.

The old man's face softened and grew less irritable, but it grew more sad, and his eyes, fixed on the fire, were looking through and through the burning coals, and he heard but an indistinct murmuring with here and there a pause and a stumble.

The other listener, though his thoughts were as busy and perhaps as sad, showed no sign of them on his face.

However hard the machinery of the brain might be working, the white, smooth forehead showed no trace of its travail.

He listened and thought with closed eyes and serene, placid forehead.

"Theatrical news! Do you care to hear anything about the theatres, Uncle Harry? Well, you don't answer, so I suppose you do."

"Signor Torroiski has recovered from his severe cold. Madame Squaloskowsky will sing at the Theatre Royal Covent Garden on the occasion of Signor Tromboni's benefit."

"FEARFUL TRAGEDY.—Our readers will be pained to hear that a great calamity has fallen upon the theatrical world. On Tuesday last the celebrated danseuse, Mademoiselle Bella Mervin, was found lying dead in her boudoir."

There was a sudden cry from the sofa, and the recumbent figure sprang to full length.

Grace dropped the paper and looked round. What she saw was the ghost of Captain Reginald Dartmouth's face, all drawn, distorted, and livid.

But she saw it only for the flash of a moment—the next he had sprung at the lamp and knocked it over.

Grace, who had seen the dreadful face, sprang to her feet and shrieked. The squire caught at the bell. The dull red coals threw a sullen light over the room, a sudden slight light only, but by it Grace could have sworn she saw Captain Reginald Dartmouth stoop and pick the paper up.

The servants came and brought the candles, then Reginald explained:

"Pon my word I'm very sorry," he said. "I woke up from a dream that the house was on fire, and, so strong and real did the dream seem, that on awaking I fancied it had been no dream at all, and made a dash at the lamp, thinking it was the fire."

The squire stared at him. Grace did not stare, but pierced him through and through with her dark eyes. But his face was as calm and serene as usual, a little pale and annoyed perhaps, nothing more.

"By gad," said the squire, "it's lucky it's no worse. If you had been alone or upstairs in your room you might have set the place on fire. James, call Mrs. Lucas to send some one to pick the glass up. Dream it, eh? By George, it must have been a strong dream, Reginald!"

"It was," said the captain, with a low, musical laugh. "And in case I should do it again I'll say good-night I think. I can't do much harm at that sort of fun in bed."

The squire shook hands; Grace, still looking at him with the piercing gaze, gave him her fingers and he took his candle.

When he had gone Grace looked for the paper. It was not under the table, the chair, or in any other part of the room.

"What on earth are you worrying for?" asked the squire. "Have they picked up all the glass?"

"Yes, I'm looking for the news-sheet," said Grace.

"Confound the news-sheet," said the squire. "You'll send me out of my mind, groping about like a blind pig. The gal's taken it down with her."

Meanwhile the captain, humming an opera air, had gained his room and locked his door. Then the humming ceased.

His face dropped with the dull dread of despair and, grasping the newspaper in his trembling hands, he set the light down and sank into a chair.

It was some minutes—awful minutes they were—before he could gather up courage to face the fearful paragraph, and when he did it was with eyes that saw nothing for a time but lines of dark, deep red blood that danced across the page.

At last he read it, read it slowly, word for word, and knew that she was dead.

At that moment he would gladly have given his life, nay, what he valued far more, the success of his plots and schemes, to bring the poor, weak-hearted, trusting ballet girl back to life again.

But it could not be; he knew it, and he told him-

self that it could not, and the very thought that to other men would have brought the greatest agony gave him relief.

He sat staring at the paper, thinking, thinking, thinking.

He had not been an utterly bad man, there had been one slight vein of good running through his life, one slight chain that had kept him from crime, and now that was gone, broken.

Yes, the ballet girl's love had been the check upon Captain Reginald Dartmouth up till now; but now the check was removed and he stood up with black, despairing face and dark, despairing, merciless heart, as ready made a villain as the fiend could have wished.

Now that she was dead, now that he had killed her, come what might he was prepared.

He had paid the price for his prize and he would have it if he had to plunge into a sea of blood to snatch it from the bottom.

He had sold his soul, he had bartered the life of the woman he loved for the Dale lands and the Dale gold, and he would have them.

"How is the squire this morning, cousin mine?" said Captain Reginald, sauntering into the breakfast-room the following morning and accosting Grace, who, looking blooming and graceful, was seated pouring out the coffee.

"Worse," said she. "And how are you? had any more dreams and broken any more lamps?"

"No," said he. "One is a fair allowance per night. Is the squire coming down?"

"No," said Grace; "this cup of coffee is for him. Poor uncle. The gout must be very painful. I wonder whether I shall have the gout when I'm old; no, of course not though, only men have it. Well, I wouldn't mind having the gout if I could only be a man."

The captain smiled. He was looking rather pale this morning, and had black shadows under his eyes.

"Oh," he said, "you have not grown out of that weakness of yours, Miss Grace."

"No, I have not, and never shall," she said, incisively. "I would like to be a man."

"For why?" he said, humouring her, and lifting his cup to his lips.

"For several things," she said, as coolly as before, then, half dreamily: "Who wouldn't wish to be? If I were a man I'd be able to leave the Dale and see foreign countries. I'd—"

She stopped as she saw him smile and continued, with a dark frown:

"I'd be able to thrash you."

He put down his cup and seized the opening.

"Grace," he said, dropping the sarcastic tone he generally used when he addressed her, and speaking with the soft, low accent he knew well how to employ, "Grace, is it not time that we should drop our warfare and declare a peace? Have we not played at enemies almost too long? Let us change the game and be—friends."

And with a winning smile he held out his long hand.

The attack, for the girl understood it as such, was so sudden that she shrank, and, confused by the soft glance of his expressive eyes, took his hand.

He bent his head and laid his lips upon it.

It was too forward a move, and he was very sorry he had made it, for the glance with which she snatched it away was expressive.

"Come," he said, "there is our bond signed, sealed, and delivered, and now we must keep it. I must promise to tease you no longer, for I have teased you, Grace, have I not? Who could resist? and you must promise to repay me by hating me a little less. No," he went on, facing her with his soft eyes, and keeping her silent. "No, I will not say this, for I do not think you hate me, Grace—I may call you Grace, remember, and you must call me Reginald, but must try and like me. Is it a bargain?"

Grace remained silent, her eyes fixed on his with a questioning, dazed look, and he went on.

"Silence gives consent, they say, and so I take yours for yes. And now you shall give me some coffee and I will go and look round the farm."

He drank the coffee standing, Grace keeping her eyes fixed upon the urn, and then he put on his cap and went out.

Both were puzzled, the fowler and bird.

The first was tortured to distraction in her endeavour to solve the problem his sudden change had set her; the latter was wondering what effect his words had made, for the set, silent regard of the great dark eyes revealed nothing.

Another girl would have read the problem at a glance, but Grace had never been made love to, knew absolutely nothing about it, and could not understand, much less name the fear she entertained for her cousin, Captain Reginald Dartmouth, whenever he was soft and gentle.



The sudden look he had given her when he had sprained his arm disquieted her; this conversation simply alarmed her.

She took the cup of coffee to the squire, sat talking to him for a little while, then put on her hat and started for the Warren.

Before she had reached the second field she saw Reginald Dartmouth walking beside the hedge.

He did not see her, could not see her, where she stood, but she could see his face distinctly.

The girl had always disliked him; for some little time she had almost feared him.

Now, as with beating heart she watched his close-knit brows and clenched teeth, the evil light in his eyes and the cruel look about his mouth, she dreaded him.

What was she to do? If she moved three feet from her corner he would see her; if she stayed where she was he would come up with her.

She did what most people would have done under the circumstances—stayed where she was.

In a minute he saw her, and, like lightning, his face changed, and was calm and smiling.

"Ah, Grace," he said, "where are you going?"

"To the Warren, Captain Dartmouth," she said.

It was the first time she had used his title, and he did not fail to notice it.

"Captain Dartmouth!" he repeated, with a reproachful smile, seating himself on the stile with his indolent, graceful air, and looking down at her pale face and knitted brows. "Where is our bargain of the morning? Gone—vanished—forgotten! Oh, surely not already, Grace!"

"I didn't make any bargain," she murmured, trying to speak defiantly, and lifting her eyes with an attempt at the old daring look, but her voice broke and her eyes dropped before the subtle look of power and cunning in his.

She felt like a bird in the hands of the fowler, indeed. But she was no dove; the fowler may chance to snare a young eagle.

"No bargain!" he repeated. "For shame. Come, let me tell it to you again. We were to be friends, we were to give up the old snarling and teasing, and have peace. We were to call each other Grace and Reginald, and last, but not least, Grace, we were to try and love each other—"

"Love!"

The word was spoken at last.

At that moment Grace passed the boundary between girlhood and womanhood.

She shrank, pale and breathless.

"I am—going to the Warren," she said, and turned.

He stretched out his white hand, and touched—as lightly as a feather, but it seemed a grasp of iron to the girl—the edge of her cape.

"Going to the Warren, and alone? Come, Grace, I never went anywhere without asking you to keep me company. Surely you will let me come too."

"I am going alone," she said, but stood stock still.

His fingers still held her.

He looked at her and sighed.

"Grace," he said, "look at me."

She dared not refuse, and lifted her eyes to his face, handsome and winning enough now.

"What's the matter? Have I said anything to offend you? Can you not forget our foolish little battles? Come, say that we are friends."

"I'll say that," she said. "We are friends."

"That is right," he said, in a soft, low whisper.

"Grace, you do not know how glad I am to hear you say that. I thought you had grown to dislike me. I thought you had perhaps taken my teasing in bad part. You would not be such a foolish child."

Ah! child no longer, Captain Reginald Dartmouth. Beware! you are dealing with a woman now!

She looked up quickly.

"No, I am not offended," she said. "I—I—Let me go, please. I'm going to the Warren."

"There," he exclaimed, "what a foolish little thing it is! First we are not offended and then we want to fly to the Warren—anywhere out of sight. Come, Grace, I cannot let you go like this. If you will not let me go with you you must take a kiss of mine to bear you company."

She started at the words—softly, tenderly spoken as they were—and shrank back against the hedge.

He took her in his arms and drew her to him.

The girl turned white to the lips, and her eyes seemed blazing with the fire of madness.

Before he could touch her lips she threw up her arm and struck his face, then like an antelope sprang from his grasp and ran as if for her life.

The captain looked after her with a sardonic smile.

He knew too well that the bird was caught and that he had but to clip its wings.

For her look of horror, hate, and repugnance he cared nothing. He had set himself to gain the Dale lands and Dale gold, not the heart of the girl, through whom he was to possess them.

Grace ran on until she reached the Warren gate, breathless and exhausted.

Her eyes were all ablaze, her cheeks all adame, but there was a savage joy burning in her heart through all her shame. He had not kissed her. It was a consolation, and a great one, and Grace sat down on a milestone beside the door to gloat on it.

He had not kissed her, but how long would it be before he did?

For ever! she vowed to herself. She would rather die than his hateful lips should touch hers, for the girl had read in his soft eyes and musical voice not love but the shadow of something else, what she knew not, and it made her hate him.

What should she do? Where should she fly for escape? She thought of Rebecca, but cast her aside with a shake of the head.

Timid, simple-hearted Rebecca could not help her. Her uncle?

Yes! He was good and kind through all his hot ways and bad temper. He would protect her, and, with cheeks still all aglow, she turned towards home. Home! Alas! she found the net spread more subtly there than elsewhere.

(To be continued.)

#### ANECDOTE OF JOSEPH II.

MANY stories are related of the quaint humours of Joseph II. of Germany, and with all his foibles the spirit of humanity was his overmastering genius. The Emperor was walking one day alone upon a public promenade of Vienna when he met a young woman who seemed to be in great distress. He spoke with her, and inquired the cause of her sorrow. She informed him that she was the daughter of a petty officer who had been killed in the imperial service; that she and her mother had for a time been enabled to support themselves by their industry, but that they were now unemployed and reduced to utter want.

"Have you received no assistance from the government?" asked Joseph.

"None," replied the girl.

"Why do you not apply to the Emperor?"

"Ah," was the reply, with a sad shake of the head, "such a step would be worse than useless."

"Why so?"

"Because he is cold and stern, and cares nothing for us who are poor and unfortunate."

"Why do you think thus?"

"Because I have been so informed by those who ought to know."

"Upon my life, my good girl, I believe you are sadly mistaken. But you shall try for yourself. The Emperor is my friend, and is indebted to me. Take this ring, and to-morrow morning present yourself in the imperial ante-chamber and show it to the usher. Bring your mother with you, and fear not. I will answer for the consequences."

The girl took the ring, and on the following morning she and her mother appeared at the palace. A number of dignitaries were in waiting for admission to the imperial presence, but the presentation of the ring gained them precedence of all others. When the young lady was introduced to the Emperor she beheld in him her friend of the previous day, and her first impulse was one of alarm in memory of the words that she had spoken; but Joseph quickly reassured her.

"Be not afraid," he said, with a benignant smile.

"I have learned of the record of your brave father, and upon you and your mother I have settled a pension which will insure you against want in time to come. Whatever else in the future you may believe of Joseph, do not believe that his heart is cold or unjust."

**ASAD HISTORY.**—Custodian of sticks and umbrellas at the door of a picture gallery is scarcely a dignified occupation for a baronet, direct descendant of one of our oldest families, who, in their day, did the state some service. It is this office the Brighton Town Council contemplate bestowing upon Sir Charles Dick, Bart., aged seventy. The story of Sir Charles's life is a painful one, and the history of his illustrious family sad in the extreme. Briefly told, the following is the unvarnished tale:—In the reign of Charles I. of pious memory, Sir William Dick, of Braid, in Scotland (we believe he was Lord Provost of Edinburgh at the time), who had made a large fortune by honest trading, lent the King's Government 52,418*l.* 12*s.* 4*d.* He had "good security" for the money, the bonds having been signed by various noblemen of high rank, penniless lords, with long pedigrees. Efforts were made to get the money paid back by the Government of Charles II.; but the greed and ingratitude of the Royal Family were a match for the Dicks. They made many and repeated applications, but only secured 5,600*l.* No more money was ever obtained, and from time to time efforts have been

made by the family to get relief from different Governments. The present baronet is now almost a pauper, helpless in his old age. It is said Mr. Gregory intends bringing his case before Parliament. There are titled pensioners in this country, deriving hundreds of pounds annually from the national funds, whose ancestors did less for their country than old Sir William Dick.

#### SCIENCE.

**VENETIAN BLINDS OF COLOURED GLASS.**—A good idea has been put into form in an invention patented by Mr. Peattie, of Raunkellor Street, Edinburgh. It is simply the substitution, with several little improvements, of coloured and ground glass instead of wood in the ordinary Venetian long and short blinds for windows. The glass is bound round with brass, to preserve it; and heavy blinds are simply wound up and down with something like a clock key. The play of colours, it is easy to see, may thus be managed so as to give beautiful effects. Outside at night and inside by day windows will look as if illuminated; and a city seen from the streets, of an evening, under such circumstances, would have quite a gay and novel effect.

**ABSORBING POWER OF THE HUMAN SKIN.**—Dr. Thomson, of Edinburgh, relates some experiments which he tried on his own person to ascertain the truth of the statements made as to the curative power of mineral water baths, depending on the absorption by the skin of certain salts and other substances which they hold in solution; and, further, to ascertain whether certain substances applied in the form of ointments, etc., pass through the skin and reach the blood before they produce any beneficial effect. His conclusions are that not only has absorption by the skin been greatly exaggerated, but in the case of substances in aqueous solution it seems to be the exception, not the rule, for absorption to take place; and that, in the case of ointments, etc., some of the substances so applied seem to be absorbed, and others not.

**EXTRACTION OF THE PRECIOUS METALS FROM COPPER PYRITES.**—The incombustible residue from copper pyrites after the sulphur has been burnt off in the process of vitriol making is powdered, mixed with common salt, and then roasted in a reverberatory furnace. The mass is then treated with water acidulated with hydrochloric acid. The solution contains the chlorides of copper, silver, and gold; the insoluble ferric oxide is used for the fettling of iron puddling furnaces. The precious metals are precipitated by addition of a soluble iodide (solution of kelp, for instance). M. Claudet has found that the iodide of silver is much less soluble than the chloride in a solution of salt, and that the precipitate obtained by the addition of an iodide to the hydrochloric solution contains nearly all the silver and gold present in this burnt ore. Hydrochloric acid is then added to remove all traces of copper from this precipitate, and the gold and silver are reduced by metallic zinc. The iodide of zinc solution obtained is used for the precipitation of a fresh quantity of silver. The copper remaining in the mother liquor after the separation of the gold and silver is precipitated by metallic iron. Works have been established at Widnes Docks, Lancashire, for carrying out this process; in the course of one year 16,300 tons of burnt ore were subjected to this treatment, and yielded 10,715 ounces of silver and 102 ounces of gold.

**ANCIENT MASTER ARTISANS.**—Taking the metals, the Bible in its first chapters shows that man first conquered metals in Asia, and on that spot to-day he can work more wonders with those metals than we can. One of the surprises that the European artists received when the English plundered the summer palace of the King of China was the curiously wrought metal vessels of every kind, far exceeding all the boasted skill of the workmen of Europe. English surgeons going to India are advised to have their instruments gilded because English steel cannot bear the atmosphere. Yet the Damascus blades of the Crusades were not gilded and they are as perfect as they were eight centuries ago. There was one at the London Exhibition the point of which could be made to touch the hilt, and could be put into a scabbard like a corkscrew, and bent every way without breaking. If a London chronometer maker wants the best steel to use in his chronometer, he does not send to Sheffield, the centre of all science, but to the Punjab, the empire of the seven rivers, where there is no science at all. The first needle ever made in Europe was made in the time of Henry VIII., and made by a negro; and when he died the art died with him. Some of the first travellers in Africa stated that they found a tribe in the interior who gave them better razors than they had. Scott, in "Tales of the Crusaders," describes a meeting between Richard Coeur de Lion and Saladin. Saladin asks Richard to show

him the wonderful strength for which he is famous, and the Norman monarch responds by severing a bar of iron which lies on the floor of his tent. Saladin says, "I cannot do that," but he takes an older-down pillow from the sofa, and, drawing his keen blade across it, it falls in two pieces. Richard says: "This is the black art; it is magic; you cannot cut that which has no resistance!" and Saladin, to show him that such is not the case, takes from his shoulders a scarf which is so light that it floats in the air, and, tossing it up, severs it before it can descend. A traveller states that he saw a man in Calcutta throw a handful of floss silk into the air, and a Hindoo sever it into pieces with his sabre. We can produce nothing like this.

#### STEEL FOR THE EXHIBITION.

1. THE council have resolved to award the gold medal of the society to the manufacturer who shall produce and send to the London International Exhibition of 1873 the best collection of specimens of steel suitable for general engineering purposes.

2. The specimens exhibited must include a complete illustration of the applications of the varieties of steel submitted.

3. Each manufacturer should send with his specimens a statement of the nature of the tests he has applied to each kind of steel submitted, and give the results of such tests.

4. The samples tested are to be exhibited together with duplicate samples, or portions of the same samples; these will be submitted to tests should the council consider it desirable.

5. All persons using steel for general engineering purposes, who are not manufacturers of such steel, are also invited to exhibit specimens on the above terms and conditions.

6. The council reserve to themselves the right of withholding the premium, in the event of the specimens exhibited not being sufficiently meritorious.

#### FAT MEAT.

HIGH medical authority states that—

1. Of all persons between the ages of fifteen and twenty-two years, more than one-fifth eat no fat meat.

2. Of persons at the age of forty-five, all, excepting less than one in fifty, habitually use fat meat.

3. Of persons who, between the ages of fifteen and twenty-two, avoid fat meat, a few acquire an appetite for it and live to a good old age, while the greater portion die with phthisis before thirty-five.

4. Of persons dying with phthisis, between the ages of twelve and forty-five, nine-tenths at least have never used fat meat.

The only wise use to be made of these assertions, taking it for granted that they are true, is to eat fat meat if you want it, and, if you do not, let it alone. Using fat meat never cured a man of consumption or prevented his having it; its mere use cannot possibly of itself cause consumption because consumption is always caused by poor blood—that is blood which has not all its healthful constituents, and which, in addition, contains some which do not naturally belong to it; blood, to be rich, health-giving, must contain its natural share of nutritive elements. There is no nutrition in fat or oil of any kind. All the curative agency which oils can have in consumption is in the direction of arresting it in some of its forms. What millions of persons have swallowed gallons of cod liver oil while labouring under consumption, and died for all that. The great general rule in eating is: Take nothing against your inclination, eat in moderation what you like best, but if it is uniformly followed by some discomfort let it alone for the present.

**BALLOONS IN BOSTON.**—Boston is getting cautious on the subject of balloons. Its people are going to indulge in a series of ascensions only 1,000 feet high, the perilous conveyance being secured to the earth by cables which can be wound up by a steam engine to haul it back. The only danger that remains is that the playful monster may tear Boston up by the roots and carry it away bodily, which would be an irretrievable misfortune for the rest of the world.

**MONEY-LENDERS.**—A bill, in the House of Commons, has been printed for the protection of minors from fraud. It recites that divers frauds are committed by money-lenders and others, who, without the consent of parents or guardians of infants or persons under the age of 21, induce such persons to enter improvidently and recklessly into onerous contracts for loans or advances of money, and by divers contrivances solicit and entice such infants into such contracts, and that such money-lenders and others often induce such infants, when about to enter into such contracts, to make or sign representations that such infants are of full age, and thereby, as well as by other wrongful devices, oppress such infants and compel them to ratify such contracts. The remedy now proposed for such mischief is that it shall be

made a misdemeanour to induce infants to borrow, and that any bond or security given shall be void; and, further, that any payment made in contravention is to be recoverable by any person paying the same. A promise made of payment after full age is to be invalid, and any representation made by an infant to borrow is not to be given in evidence against him. Any person who for gain purchases a bill knowing it to be forged is to be guilty of a misdemeanour. A parent or guardian is to recover by summary proceedings before justices 20*l.* from a person offending. The names on the Bill are Mr. Mitchell Henry, Mr. Headlam, Mr. Butt, Mr. Scourfield, and Mr. Charles Gilpin.

#### TO-MORROW.

LOUD chilling winds may hoarsely blow

From off the distant mountain,

And winter, on his wings of snow,

May hush the crystal fountain;

Sere, withered leaves, on every hand,

May tell of earth in sorrow,

Again will spring-time warm the land

And bring a glad to-morrow.

The storm may gather loud and fast,

Sweeping o'er the angry sky;

Rough winds may rock the stubborn mast,

And the waves pile mountain high;

Darkness may deepen in her gloom,

Nor stars relieve her sorrow,

Light will come trembling from her tomb

In golden-haired to-morrow.

The sun may chase the far-off cloud,

And leave the world in sadness,

Still will her smile break through the shroud

And fill the air with gladness;

The day may lose her golden light,

Her tears the night may borrow,

Yet with her parting, last good-night

She brings us fair to-morrow.

The hills, once green with verdure clad,

May sing their plaintive story,

Full robed again in echoes glad,

Will boast their former glory;

The rose may linger on the stem,

Its fragrance breathes of sorrow,

'Twill yield to earth its vital gem

And bloom again to-morrow.

Broad arches span the brow of heaven,

And shimmer in their brightness,

Like diadems of glory riven,

Lost in a sea of whiteness,

Their lustre glimmering on the sight,

Like banners draped in sorrow,

Tells of joy, of peace, of light,

Where beams a bright to-morrow.

The thoughts that burn like altar fires,

With incense pure and holy,

Whose flames reach high in proud desires,

The riches of the lowly,

May lose the fervour of their glow,

Nor pleasure longer borrow,

Their music may forget to flow,

'Twill swell again to-morrow.

The hopes, the loves of days gone by,

May fade in joyous seeming,

The light that filled the radiant eye

May lose its early beaming,

Care's silver threads may gather o'er

The brow oppressed by sorrow,

Still brighter joys seem yet in store,

And promise much to-morrow.

The victory that we win in life

May waver at its dawning,

Love may be wounded in the strife,

And tears may cloud our morning,

But, with each fresh returning day,

Hope wings away our sorrow,

Sheds o'er the heart her blissful ray

And whispers of to-morrow.

W. F. F.

**A BRIGHT THOUGHT.**—The German Emperor, while visiting a village in his land, was welcomed by the school children of the place. After their speaker had made a speech for them he thanked them. Then, taking an orange from a plate, he asked "To what kingdom does this belong?" "The vegetable kingdom, sire," replied the girl. The Emperor took a gold coin from his pocket, and holding it up asked: "And to what kingdom does this belong?" "To the mineral kingdom, sire," replied the girl. "And to what kingdom do I belong, then?" asked the Emperor. The little girl coloured deeply, for she did not like to say "The animal kingdom," as he thought she would, lest his Majesty should be offended, when a bright thought came, and she said, with radiant eyes, "Hea-

ven's kingdom, sire." The Emperor was deeply moved. A tear stood in his eye. He placed his hand on the child's head and said, most devoutly, "Heaven grant that I may be accounted worthy of that kingdom."

#### ACQUAINTANCES.

A GREAT many people find "acquaintances" a mere necessary evil of society. Indeed, I myself have often said, Give me a few friends who love me, and I want no mere acquaintances. I've changed my mind. The more we have the better.

To friends we may confide our troubles, and so make them grow. We may tell them our private affairs, which, ten to one, they tell again, being so sorry for us. We ask advice, and get it, and follow it, and suffer in consequence.

Now an acquaintance is quite a different thing. Acquaintances stay in the parlour, and we go to see them with our crumpe all right, and our collar on. We smile, and talk of the weather and the fashions. It is very well to talk of the weather and the fashions, and the last new novel, and all that—now and then. We forget our personal grievances, of which every one has plenty, for a while.

When Mrs. A has been "sitting up for Alfred until one o'clock the night before," it is better that her acquaintance Mrs. B should call than her friend Fanny. She would tell Fanny that Alfred's conduct was dreadful, and that she should go home to ma if he went on. But Mrs. B asks, "How is Mr. A?" and Mrs. A says, "Very well, thank you." And Mrs. B says, "I do hope we shall see you at our home together some evening soon." And Mrs. A says, "We shall take a great deal of pleasure in coming." And then comes the thought, how dreadful it would be to be talked about by acquaintances.

Careful Mrs. C might take a friend into her bedroom, and dilate upon the crimes of omission of which Polly, the chambermaid, has been guilty.

She might rehearse her last scene with the cook, and weep over a spoiled pudding; but an acquaintance causes her to don her best cap and talk pleasantly for half an hour, and she rings the bell and tells Polly to bring a glass of water, and suitably offers a fan, and spares the acquaintance the treat that a friend would have had, and is much improved in nerves thereby.

In one word, acquaintances are good. They are not led into the midst of family arrangements. They are not treated to wash-day luncheons. They do not see shabby morning gowns and crimping pins. They are a fine sedative for all sorts of agonies.

Even a case of jilting is better treated by a call from an acquaintance full of the last Fancy Fair than by a sympathetic visit from Arabella.

And my advice is, Know as many people as you can. Heaven bless friends, and Heaven keep us from imposing on them our troubles, our poorest meals, our shabbiest clothes, and the mysteries of the *ménage*. They don't deserve it from us.

But thank Providence for acquaintances also, for in their company we try to look our best, behave our nicest, put our best foot foremost, and exhibit the best, and not the worst qualities of our relatives. From them we never ask advice, which is generally a dreadful thing to get, and when one is quite upset and ready to sleep somebody.

Nothing is more surely "indicated," as the doctors say, with a view to speedy recovery than a call from a person of such a degree of intimacy that she must wait in the parlour until we put on a long back curl and a pair of bracelets.

M. K. D.

#### CHARLEY GALE.

By the Author of "The Lily of Connaught."

#### CHAPTER III.

Who knows himself a braggart  
Let him fear this—for it will come to this—  
That every braggart shall be found an ass.

Shakespeare.

"How is it, Charley? The suspenders or expulsion?" cried Frank Weldon, as Charley Gale entered the waiting-room.

"Neither," said Charley, with a shake of his head.

"What? Only a reprimand?" cried Mat Morton.

"Who's afraid? Me next."

"Both together, I'm ready. I don't want to 'stand here idly waiting,'" exclaimed Weldon, in a half-singing manner.

"Neither of you is wanted. He says that he will let this thing drop, and you can both go home."

"What? Hurray for Quellington!"

"You are a plucky fellow, Charley, for standing up for all us!" cried the boys, as they seized their overcoats and mufflers.

Charley Gale said nothing, but quietly buttoning himself up started for the door; the others, however,



were ready as soon as he was, and they went down the stairs together.

"But what was the matter with the gov'nor, Charley, that he went on so?" asked Frank Weldon, as they reached the snow-covered street.

"I don't know of anything," was the answer.

"Why," said Morton, "Frank and I peeped, and he looked as if you were going to expel him instead of him you. Didn't he, Frank?"

"Yes," said Frank. "He looked for all the world as if he'd taken a heavy dinner of hard-boiled eggs without butter."

"He must have given you a talking to," said Mat Morton. "But I knew you were safe enough when he was so long about it."

"So did I!" exclaimed Frank; "I know the gov'nor. When he does the heavy he's as short and sour as an acid drop. A fellow doesn't get much talking to, but a fellow's old man does though, on satin-laid note in round-band. What did he say, Charley?"

"He spoke very kindly to me," said Gale; "and warned me against getting into the fights."

"Oh, bother!" he said that to all of us. He's always saying it," cried Mat Morton. "There was more than that, for Frank and I heard him."

"These words were said in a significant tone, and Charley Gale turned towards the speaker.

"See here, Mat Morton," he said. "I do think that if Mr. Quillington wanted you or any one else to hear what he was saying to me he would have asked you to come in; and I don't think it raised either Frank or you in his opinion for him to catch you listening."

"Oh, my!" exclaimed Morton, with an angry sneer. "It must have been something mighty fine and particular to need so much secrecy."

"No matter what it was," said Charley, "you weren't asked to listen."

"Why, Charley, there was no harm in that," broke in Frank Weldon, in his laughing manner. "We knew you were getting in for it, and we only wanted to take lessons for our own turn. Wasn't that all, Mat?"

But Mat was insulted and angry, and walked along doggedly without answering. Mat Morton was one of those boys who, though very careless about offending others, are very thin-skinned and ready to take offence themselves. He was also very quarrelsome. Frank Weldon was the opposite of this; fun-loving and mischievous as he was, he had great respect for the feelings of others, was slow to anger and always acted the honourable part of peace-maker among his comrades.

"Come now," he said, "you fellows ain't going to get up a fight between you. It's not fair, Mat, to want to pick at Charley after he has stood all the jaw and got us all off, especially when you and I were the starters of the row. For if I hadn't begun at the others they wouldn't have troubled us, and if you hadn't called 'old clothes' at them and wet-baked your snowballs they wouldn't have thrown stones. Besides, we had no need to go on their pond to skate when we were so near the park."

"They may think what they like," cried Mat, tugging a pair of skates from his overcoat pocket; "but we have just as good a right to that pond as they have, and I for one am going to that very pond again. I don't care if there was five hundred of them there. Who says follow?"

"I've got my iron, too," said Frank, slapping his pocket; "but I move we go to the park. There's a more room, and it's better ice. We'd best go there."

"Not I," cried Mat. "If I don't go to that same pond I hope I may never buckle a strap! Come along!—the fellows are all going. There—they're waiting."

Charley Gale had walked along thoughtfully since the last rebuke he gave to Morton; but now, as that warlike youth was starting off, with jingling skates, to join a knot of their schoolmates who were waiting at the corner, he caught him by the sleeve and stopped him.

"I say, Mat," he said, "take my advice. You'd better not. There's sure to be another row, and we won't get off so easy next time."

Mat Morton, as is usual with unreasoning, self-willed people, was only confirmed in his purpose by this steppe.

"See here, Charley Gale," he said, pompously, "I don't want to quarrel with you, but I'm a fellow that likes to have his own way, and I'll have it too. I'm a-going to that pond. If you want to come along we'd like to have you, if you don't there's no one forcing you; there's plenty without you. That's all I have to say about it."

"I would like to go with you very well, but I have promised not to," said Charley, not heeding the overbearing tone of the other; "and I would advise you and the other fellows to go somewhere else. You did not hear all that I did."

Mat Morton laughed, and nudged Frank Weldon with his elbow; but although Charley Gale's face flushed at noticing this he went on, calmly:

"It's nothing to me where you go, only I ought to tell you what Mr. Quillington said."

"Oh, bother old Quillington!" exclaimed Mat, with a swagger, for they had now joined the crowd of schoolmates at the corner, and he wanted to show off. "Does he think that we're going to be scared off the pond by him and a lot of ragamuffins? I'd like to see myself. Wouldn't you, fellows?"

The crowd of boys all laughed scornfully at the idea of either obedience or fear keeping them away from the scene of battle.

"Well," said Charley, "if you won't listen to me you know what will come of it."

"If the principal has anything to say to me he can say it to myself, and before every one of you too," said Mat, with great wagging of his head. "If he wants to turn me out of his old school he can do it. What do I care? My father is able to pay my way in a better one. I ain't depending on any one."

"Oh, Mat, Mat, don't!" cried Frank Weldon, catching Morton by the arm and interposing himself between the two. "Don't mind him, Charley, don't."

But Charley Gale pushed him aside and confronted Mat Morton with gleaming eyes and flushed face, and his lips quivered with rising passion as he spoke:

"Mat Morton," he said, "I was advising you as a schoolmate and a friend, but I shall advise you no more, since I know now that you are a mean bully and a keyhole listener!"

Mat Morton's face flushed crimson, and he threw his skates on the snow and began to unbutton his coat.

Several of the boys caught hold of him, but that only increased his rage.

"Let go of me, fellows!" he cried, struggling. "I ain't going to stand quiet and let anybody call me such names as that. I'll soon show him who's the bully!"

"Let him go! Let them have it out!" cried several of the bystanders. "Frank, don't hold Gale! Give him room!"

Gale did not wait for room to be given him, for he shook off Frank Weldon's slight hold, and, handing his books to one of the boys, stood prepared for the attack. Mat Morton's obliging classmates now set him free; but, for all his rage, he looked as if he would have liked to have been held again.

"Now!" he panted, as he stood face to face with his cool opponent—"now! You said you were going to thrash me—let us see you do it!"

There was a titter in the crowd, and it broadened into a laugh when Charley Gale, looking him steadily in the eyes, said:

"You know I never said anything of the sort."

"No, no, Mat!" exclaimed a few just spirits in the crowd. "Twas you said you'd thrash him!"

At that moment Mat Morton certainly looked like a proper subject for some friendly holding back. He was in a sad fix. Retreat was dishonourable, and advance was dangerous. He had counted on friendly interference, and here were the friends, like a parcel of demons, encouraging him to "go in" and get thrashed.

"He said that I was a bully!" he cried, with the loud-voiced passion of a coward. "Let him prove it."

Every boy present saw through the miserable pretence, and Charley Gale, with a contemptuous glance and a curl of the lip, took his books from the boy who held them and turned away without saying a word. That was the unkindest cut of all, and Mat Morton felt it more than he would have done the blows he feared. But, though he put on the look of a conqueror, he did not speak until the enemy was several yards away.

"There you see, fellows, who's the bully," he said. "He didn't dare to see it out."

"Don't mind him, Charley," said Frank Weldon, as he saw Gale turn to come back at the last words, and ran to prevent him. "Don't mind him, he's mad, and don't mean what he says."

"Don't he?" growled Mat, in a defiant tone, carefully lowered so as not to reach the ears of the person he defied.

"Yes, he does! Yes, he does!" cried several of the war party among the crowd.

Whatever might have been the consequences of this challenge their development was hindered by a shower of icicles, snow, and broken twigs falling upon the heads of Morton and his companions from the tree beneath which they stood. As it was a calm day and consequently this could not be occasioned by wind, the boys started back and looked up to see the cause of it. It being mid-winter of course the tree was leafless, and they could see a clumsy dark body huddled high up among the icy branches. All thoughts of the late quarrel vanished with the discovery of this new object of interest, and the boys instinctively

ran to the middle of the street to gather stones, those true boyish tests of the unknown.

"What is it?" cried several.

"It's an owl," said one.

"Oh, oh! What a queer old owl!" jeered another.

"It's a bear 'scaped from the menagerie!" shouted another.

"A bear! A bear!"

"Let's stone him!" roared half a dozen, and at the words as many stones whistled through the frozen branches and fell rattling upon the ground.

Another volley was about to be delivered when the poised arms were stayed by a howl from the object in the tree, and the wondering marksmen heard the "bear" address them in snuffling tones:

"Come now, you fellows, drop that. I ain't no bear, and ye'd best stop your stone throwing."

"Why, I hope you may fly me for a kite," roared Frank Weldon, "if it isn't the Innocent."

It was indeed Bob Wigner, whose curiosity to see the manner in which Charley Gale should be punished had caused him to mount this tree, whence he could look into the class-room through one of the side windows. He was about descending from his perch, disgusted at the mockery of punishment which he had witnessed, when the crowd of scholars stopped beneath, and he was afraid to venture down. But now he was freed, and, with cheers of laughter, the whole party were soon engaged in shelling him out of his perch with snowballs.

"How are you, Innocence?" cried one, and a hard snowball struck with a thud in the stomach of poor Bob, who answered with a howl.

"Let me hit him for his father!" Thud! "Oh!"

"Innocence has fled from earth." Slap! "Oh!"

"And climbed a tree." Bang! "Oh!"

"Oh, don't. You stop that. It hurts," cried Bob.

"You baked stones in yourn," cried one of the tormentors, planting a heavy snowball right in his victim's face.

"Oh, ho! See how he grins."

Between fright and pain Bob's hold on the icy limbs was beginning to loosen and slip, and as his weakened fingers parted from one branch he desperately clutched at the next. It was impossible between his bellowing and the cheers of his tormentors that the principal, whose windows overlooked the scene, should remain undisturbed. He heard the tumult, and running to the window threw up the sash and called out to the screaming crowd below just at the moment that Bob Wigner's last hold failed him, and he tumbled through the branches as if he had been shot.

At the sound of their master's voice the academy boys all took to their heels, leaving poor Bob with one leg caught on a point of the tree-box and the other on a snag of a branch, hanging head downward like a half-dressed calf before a butcher's shop, save that this calf retained the power of his lungs and bellowed most lustily.

The principal hastened to his rescue, for not one of the scholars looked back, and the swiftest fugitive of all was Mat Morton, who had so fiercely defied the power of "old Quillington."

With the assistance of a policeman Mr. Quillington released the roaring Bob from his dangerous position and set him upon his feet.

"What were you doing up there?" asked the principal, shaking him by the collar.

"I got up to see you flog the feller that flogged me. But you didn't do it," sputtered the Innocent.

"See here, my boy," said the teacher, giving him another shake, "you are a disturber—a mischief-maker; and I warn you to go home and not interfere any more with my scholars or I will have you arrested and punished. Away now!"

The boy glanced at the threatener and at the policeman, and very nimbly took to his heels, but scarcely had he reached the opposite side when he put his hands to his mouth in the manner of a speaking trumpet, and bellowed through them:

"I say, old man, we won't interfere with them. Oh, no—not at all. Tain't likely. They're gone up to our pond, and there'll be a couple of hundred of our fellers there to flog 'em. That's all!"

The officer made a feint of pursuing him, but he skipped away with a defiant crow, and disappeared around the corner.

"This must be prevented. I must have assistance. Can you accompany me?" hurriedly asked Mr. Quillington.

"Sorry, sir, can't leave my beat," said the officer, turning on his heel and walking away, while the teacher started off in the direction the boys had taken.

#### CHAPTER IV.

In peace there's nothing more becomes a man  
Than mild behaviour and humility;  
But when the blast of war blows in our ears  
Let us be tigers in our fierce department.

Shakespeare.

CHARLEY GALE did not wait to see the cause of



## [KITTY'S ADVICE.]

the excitement that had called attention from the quarrel.

He turned away with a hurt heart.

"Frank Weldon," he said, "you had better go with me; you will only get into trouble by staying with them. Mat Morton is mean."

But Frank was already starting impatiently back to see the cause of the merriment.

"No fear, Charley," he cried, "I won't get into any mess. I only want to see the fun, and then I'll go straight home."

So Charley turned away alone and took the homeward course with bitter feeling.

The words of his teacher, notwithstanding the strangely kind manner in which they were spoken, had hurt him deeply, and this was made worse by the insulting insinuations of Mat Morton, for he knew that as Mat's parents were wealthy his word had great weight with his classmates, and he could make it very unpleasant in the school for any boy to whom he took a dislike.

All that Charley Gale knew about the dependency hinted at was that he had been placed as a sort of ward in the care of Mr. Ezra Crittles, an attorney and stock speculator in a small way.

He had a very vague remembrance of his early home—a vision of one angelic face only occasionally seen bending over him like a guardian spirit.

He had often wondered if this was his mother. If so, why had her visits in his childhood been so few and far between, why were they now separated, and what link could there be between the selfish, tricky Ezra Crittles and the angel of his memory?

He knew that Mr. Crittles received remittances in his favour at regular intervals, but he did not know the amount, and felt sure that only a pinched portion of the funds so supplied was appropriated to his use.

When he had ventured to ask questions about his origin he was angrily silenced.

The most information he ever received was that his mother and father were both dead. This he did not believe.

His young mind had long chafed under this state of things, his feelings rebelled against the petty tyranny to which he was subjected by his mysterious guardian, and the desire for independence grew stronger day by day, until now, as he went thoughtfully home, he determined that he would burst from the grasp of Crittles and seek his fortune in the world—a new Whittington.

Ezra Crittles's house was a tall, lanky structure of brick, that stood alone in the snow-covered open

in the vicinity of the park. Chilliness and desolation brooded over it and its surroundings.

But Charley Gale thought not of that as he hurried homeward, for his mind was taken up with all the strange whirl of doubt and confidence, hope and timidity which every boy feels when he first thinks of cutting loose from all support and facing the world single-handed.

He would stand no more of Mr. Crittles's tyranny—he would assert his right to better treatment—he knew it was paid for—he would no longer be looked upon as a dependent—he would demand a knowledge of his parents—he was sure they were alive, for Mr. Crittles was not the man to support a dependent for nothing. But his great resolutions were broken in upon by the tramp of heavy feet and the hurried, cautious tones of a voice calling:

"Hurry, Charley, child! Make 'aste—you're wanted!"

When the boy raised his head his eyes fell upon the grotesque figure of a very stout, alipshod woman, in a short dress, crunching through the frozen snow toward him. Her arms, bare to the elbows, were of great size and as red as a beefsteak, and her broad face, framed in a gray shawl, which was thrown over her head, glowed like a pumpkin-lantern at Hallow Eve. She might be sixteen, she might be sixty. Time had written no wrinkle on her beauteous brow, and the rose-bloom of youth covered her whole countenance.

"Why, Kitty, what's the matter?" asked Charley, as he joined her, and she turned to trot back at his side.

"Matter, child!" she answered. "Matter enough entirely for one day's curing. There's been such a row in the house, and all about you."

"About me?" said the boy.

"Ay, about you," she said. "Ould cockle-brain was niver in such tantrums before. He wanted you home early to copy some of his dirty papers or carry them somewhere or other, and he sent Pether an' Cilly one after the other, to the 'cademy after ye, an' they heard all about the fight we were thryin' to keep so dark, an' the two of them came home like to eat the heads of each other for who'd get givin' the worst account of it. Then wasn't there 'wigs on the green'—the ould man at it like an auctioneer and the ould woman fumin' like brewer's yeast. So when I saw the boys passin' up with sticks I knew there was goin' to be another row, and I sez to myself, 'I must find Charley and keep him out of it,' sez I, 'for there's no knowin' what'll happen if Mr. Crittles gets any madder than he is.'"

"Kitty!" exclaimed the boy, stopping short, and

stopping her too by laying his hand on her big red arm. "It's very good of you to think of me and to come out in the cold to look for me. I'm thankful to you for it. But I don't care about Mr. Crittles's madness. I'm not going to stand it any longer. Why don't he make Peter do his messages and copying instead of sending him after me? I won't be Peter's servant any longer."

"Why, what on earth's got into the boy?" exclaimed Kitty, fastening her great blue eyes upon him in wonder.

"He calls himself my guardian, Kitty," went on the boy, angrily; "and yet I ain't good enough to go to school with Peter—I must run messages while Peter spoils the piano. I won't do it any more. I'm just as able to spoil the piano as Peter."

"Thrus for you, Charley, dear," said Kitty, consolingly.

"And now, Kitty," said the boy, flushing at thoughts of his injuries. "Just when my teacher was getting to like me old Crittles must go and tell him I was a dependent."

"A dependent?" cried Kitty. "What did he mane by that?"

"He meant that I was a beggar," said Charley, with an angry tremble in his voice; "that he was keeping and educating me for charity."

"For charity?" cried Kitty, in angry astonishment. "Oh, the story-tellin' vagabond, and it only this blisid mornin' I heard him tellin' the ould woman that he must wait on Charley's money before he could pay anything on his mortgage. Oh, the thief o' the world. Who told you that?"

"The teacher, Mr. Quillington."

"Bad luck to his good nature!" exclaimed Kitty. "Some people's tongues are as long as fishin' rods. Couldn't he have kept his dirty news to himself, and not fret the heart of a child?"

"No, no, Kitty," cried the boy, eagerly. "He told me for my good. He was very kind. I cannot tell you how kind he was. Kitty, Kitty, you must think well of Mr. Quillington; he is my friend."

"Then my heart's whole kindness to the good man, and Heaven bless the friend of the fatherless!" cried Kitty, warmly, catching the boy by the hand in a motherly manner. "Come, there's a storm brewin'. See, the sky's gettin' dark and the snow-flakes are flyin' as big as feathers. Let us get home; and always remember this, Charley dear, that let who will fail you, Kitty Nolan's your friend!"

The boy pressed her hand and they jogged along together through the whirling flakes.

"But it was mean of Crittles, wasn't it, Kitty?" said Charley, after a pause.



"Meanness was his nurse," was the curt answer. "And now the boys have got hold of it, and they're beginning to turn up their noses at me," continued the boy.

"It's the manner of pigs, Charley dear; don't mind them."

"But I must mind them, Kitty. I can't stand it. If I have a right to better treatment from Mr. Crittles I must have it, or else—"

"Or else what?"

The boy gathered all his breath for the answer.

"I won't go back to that school," he said, decidedly, "and I won't live at Crittles's."

"Heaven bless the child!" cried Kitty, in surprise. "What would you do?"

"I'd tell him to keep the money he gets from people who are ashamed to own me. I'd get a place and earn my living. I've seen younger boys than me earning their living. I'd be independent, Kitty."

The boy looked up with proud determination at the face of his friend, and Kitty Nolan's proud eyes became more watery than their wont as she clasped her big hand on his head and said:

"Heaven help your wit, Charley dear; you're only a child, but there's the making of a man in you. You mustn't think of what you say at present. Let things jog along as usual. You don't know what'll turn up. Kitty Nolan's ears ain't stuffed with waddin' if her eyes are weak. The whispering gentleman, who calls with the money, doesn't always whisper—cat as he is; and Crittles isn't always wide awake, skindint as he is."

"What whispering gentleman? What money?" questioned Charley, eagerly trying to stop his companion, whose steps had quickened with her words.

"Never mind," she said; "a quiet tongue makes a good game. Leave it to me. I'll put a pin in old Crittles's nose before the sunflowers blossom."

A loud cheer and shouts of laughter ringing through the snowy air hindered the boy from pressing his question. They had turned into a cross road and were pressing along with their heads bent against the storm, which drifted across the hills, and the sounds they heard proceeded from a crowd of skaters who were fitting to and fro more nimbly than the snow flakes on a lake-like pond on one side of the road. It was so deep below the level of the road that Charley could look down on the heads of the skaters, and he had no difficulty in recognising his schoolmates. He was soon recognized in turn, for several of them as they flew past called out, cheerily:

"Hi, Charley Gale, ain't you going to join us? Come! It's such fun."

"Whose them?" asked Kitty Nolan.

"They're our fellows of the academy," said Charley, nearly forgetting his late troubles in viewing the exciting scene. "There's Alf Usher, and Bil Brodie, and Tom Dix, and Frank Weldon. Ain't they having a jolly time? Ain't they, Kitty?"

"This is where you had the jolly time that ended in stickin' plaster, isn't it?" asked Kitty, severely, hurrying onward.

But plucky Charley had forgotten the dangers of yesterday, and he followed her reluctantly.

"I wish I had my skates. There's no fighting now," he said.

But scarcely had the words passed his lips when a chorus of loud shouts split the air, and he saw a whole army of boys springing up from the opposite side of the road and rushing toward the pond, brandishing sticks and throwing stones and blocks of ice.

At the same time the shouts were repeated from the other side of the pond, and another strong body of the enemy appeared in that direction.

Charley Gale saw that his schoolmates were fairly surrounded, and he knew by the numbers of the other boys and the fact of their all being armed with sticks which way the contest would go.

The assailants ran right past where he and Kitty Nolan stood, but seeing him with a woman they did not recognize him as one of the enemy, and Kitty, catching him by the arm, began to drag him away.

He heard the cries of dismay and pain from the skaters as the stones fell among them, and he saw more than one of them sink on the ice.

Though the shouting of the assailants continued, the throwing ceased, for the snow was deepening, and stones could not be easily found, but the worst of the fight was to come, and as Charley saw the crowd rushing down, and heard the plump of the others as they dropped from the embankment on to the ice with their sticks in their teeth, he wrenched his hand from Kitty's sturdy grasp, crying:

"They will be killed. The odds are too great—the cowards!"

"You foolish goslin'," cried Kitty, recapturing him. "What could you do among them? It's their own fault. Come home."

She was trying to drag him away when he heard the cries of the combatants on the ice as they closed,

and, turning his head, saw Frank Weldon knocked down by a cudgel in the hand of the Innocent.

He forgot the principal's warnings, his own wounds, Kitty's entreaties—everything—and, bursting away, threw himself down among the screaming crowd.

Seizing a stick dropped by one of the fighters whom he had knocked down in his jump, he started to work his way where he had seen Frank Weldon fall. He saw the hero, Mat Morton, rush by, roaring like a bull, with a boy half his size in hot pursuit, and, after receiving several heavy blows, he caught a glimpse of Frank Weldon struggling with the Innocent and several of his fellows. Suddenly there was a trembling underfoot—a roaring, crackling sound—a scream of warning from the boys of both parties, and a general rush toward the shores of the pond with wild cries of:

"Look out! look out! The ice is breaking!"

Charley knew this already, but he still held on toward where Frank Weldon and his captors remained wonder-struck in the centre. He gave the Innocent a crack over the head that slightly increased his stupidity, and, catching Weldon by the arm, he cried:

"Come, Frank, run before it's too late."

But it was already too late, for as they started Charley felt the ice begin to crackle and sink, and threw his arm around Frank to keep him from falling.

Like a scene revealed by lightning he caught sight of some dozen boys in frightened attitudes all around them—of a shouting, gesticulating crowd on the bank—of several policemen rushing along the road, and Kitty Nolan scrambling excitedly down the bank, then the ice sank with a roar, and as they were thrown flat the water rushed up with a hiss, and a dozen boys were screaming and struggling in the breach.

Though gasping with the sudden shock of the cold water, Charley Gale, on finding he did not touch bottom, made for the nearest edge of ice, supporting Frank, and crying for him to strike out. They reached and clutched it, but it crumbled away in their grasp, and when, on trying again, they obtained a hold on the brittle edge, they were pulled from it and dragged down by their fellow strugglers.

Cold and exhaustion had done their work, and Charley Gale, still clinging to the now helpless Frank, gave one cry for help and sank in darkness.

(To be continued.)

## THE MYSTERY OF FALKLAND TOWERS.

### CHAPTER XVII.

If yet thou love game at so dear a rate,  
Learn this that hath old gamblers dearly cost:  
Dost lose? Rise up. Dost win? Rise in that state.

Who strives to sit out losing hands are lost.

Herbert.

SOME days had passed, not very many, but enough to have made the fox-hunt but a fleeting memory with the majority of the merry guests at Falkland Towers.

Young Squire Romney had completely recovered from his mishap, and was now a frequent visitor at the castle. But Lady Florence was not happy, or, at least, she was but ill at ease. A merry ghost had been invoked at the castle. Although he was hailed with delight by all the guests and nearly all the household, and was not altogether without some fascination for Lady Florence herself, she feared his coming, and was not without some foreboding of evil should his stay be prolonged, which it threatened to be.

It was the ghost of gambling, the spectre of cards.

He seemed to have bewitched the entire establishment. Whist, hazard, cribbage, écarté were the presiding deities of the evenings, and some of the gentlemen wooed them in the daytime as well.

"I wish they had never commenced to play in the castle. I wish all the dice and cards in the world were destroyed," exclaimed Lady Florence, upon one languid morning when she sat with some of her lady guests awaiting the breakfast hour. "Everything has become feverish and unnatural about the place, which used to be so home-like and quiet."

"What a compliment you pay to your guests," chided the countess; "but really, my dear lady, you will yet, I trust, come to like play as well as the rest of us."

"I was a whist player when I was a child," said Lady Fitz-Grammont.

"And I," said Miss Felicia.

"My father never objected to my playing cards with the country gentlemen when they visited the castle," said Lady Florence; "but the stakes we played for were merely nominal. But my Lord Falkland has seen fit to turn the castle into a pandemonium of vicious gaming. I shall only be too glad when we go up to London."

The countess burst into an immoderate fit of laughter, in which she was joined by the other ladies.

"Poor, innocent, unsophisticated Lady Florence!" she exclaimed, "not to know that from here to London is like leaping from a little pond into the mighty sea. Why, my dear girl, they all gamble there!"

"What! ladies?"

"Unquestionably, in their own houses and in public saloons. Your beauty shall shine in all of them, my dear. We will yet make a woman of the world of you."

"You can never make much of a gamester out of me, at any rate," said poor Lady Florence, who was completely bewildered by the web of falsehoods and misrepresentations which the wicked ones were weaving around her preparatory to steering her into the whirl of London guilt and peril wherein their own innocence had been wrecked.

"Come, now!" said the pretty but *passé* countess, banteringly; "you have no right to complain, my dear. You and your shrewd friend Madame La Grande have certainly got away with twenty of my guineas within the past few days; and Hugo Withers told me that he was also a loser to you."

"If I should return to London to-day," said Lady Fitz-Grammont, "I should do so with twenty pounds less than I brought here. But of course it is all fair, and I intend to stay until I win them back, or haven't a farthing of my pin-money left."

"It makes no difference to me whether I win or lose. Fortunately I am in no need of money," said Lady Florence. "But it is obvious to me that the effect of high play is not only pernicious to those indulging in it but upon all around them. Why, all the servants have become gamesters; and it was only yesterday that I discovered that exceedingly eccentric gentleman, Doctor Gipsajoker, teaching my little maid Annette how to gamble with dice on one of the upper landings, and at the same time chattering with her in a most outlandish dialect, which he said was the *patois* of the Pyrenees, but which I suspect was nothing more than the Romany gibberish of these gipsies. At any rate, I scolded Annette soundly, and hinted to the learned doctor that he might easily find more dignified employment."

"I am glad that you had the spirit to do so," said Madame La Grande. "Little Annette is no more than a child, but when I first took her under my protection she had somewhere picked up a knowledge of that gipsy tongue."

"Confess, my dear Lady Florence," said the countess, "that some of your conscientious scruples against gambling arise from the infatuation of your 'old playmate,' Mr. Romney."

Lady Florence blushed—the more deeply because she felt that more than one pair of questioning eyes were upon her.

"Mr. Romney, though, I understood from Lord Fitz-Grammont, has also had uniform success," said Lady Fitz-Grammont.

"Mr. Romney's affairs can interest me but little," said Lady Florence, recovering herself. "But I never knew before that he was governed by such an infatuation, and I cannot but regret that he is."

"He is certainly a noble young gentleman, and appears to be continually avayed this way and that by two spirits of very different order," said Miss Felicia; "for I have noticed that, while his true friend, Lord Falkland, ever endeavours to dissuade him from playing, that specious gentleman, Captain Diggs, is as persistently luring him on to deeper play."

"You are right," chimed in Madame La Grande; "for I am aware that his lordship and this tiger-fighter, as he calls himself, have had some chilling words upon this very subject. Captain Diggs could not see the necessity of his lordship's 'interference,' as he was pleased to call it, and his lordship was very pronounced in declaring that the comparative inexperience of Mr. Romney should not be taken advantage of."

Lady Florence sighed.

She had also noted the same thing spoken of by Miss Felicia, and her mind was filled with doubts and fears.

She remembered what Captain Diggs had told her—to have implicit confidence in his friendship, no matter how appearances might be against him. She had promised to do so, had tried to do so, but her confidence was fast weakening, and she was becoming completely bewildered.

She could not help noting the coldness between his lordship and Diggs, which was so well acted by both that she really began to believe it to arise from a sincere desire, upon Falkland's part, to save his young neighbour from a perilous fascination.

Then she dared not advise with young Romney herself, for fear that he would mistake her motive. Nevertheless, thus far Captain Diggs was still a mystery to her—one in whom she had not altogether relinquished hope and faith.

The workings of the young lady's mind were constantly studied by Madame La Grande, who, with his lordship, saw nothing in them but to cause their rejoicing.

The conversation was interrupted by the entrance of several of the gentlemen, none of whom appeared to have been to bed.

Lady Fitz-Grammont shook her finger at her liege lord, who was one of the culprits, and Miss Felicia had some words of chiding ready for her cousin Hugo, but Lady Florence's eyes instantly sought Ralph Romney, though she tried hard to disguise the solicitude she felt.

His eyes were very restless and bright, and his dark cheeks flushed and feverish.

Captain Diggs, as gay and airy as ever—indeed, apparently no loss of sleep or anything else could dash the sparkle and effrontery of the man—was at his elbow, and Lord Falkland was also of the party, but his face wore a sad, hopeless expression as he retired into the recess of the window.

"Fortune has favoured me again, Lady Florence," said Ralph. "What do you say to two hundred pounds at one night's sitting?"

Lady Florence shrugged her pretty shoulders contemptuously.

"I think nothing of it, as compared to the loss of sleep, nerve, and every other healthful energy which it entails," said she.

"But the excitement, my dear young lady!" exclaimed Captain Diggs; "the excitement! do you call that nothing?"

"For those who like it it is, perhaps, everything," said Lady Florence, dryly.

"I should think," said Lord Falkland, contemptuously, "that after so much tiger-hunting in Bengal you would find but small excitement in our English whist and cribbage parties."

"Ah, my lord, my imagination is a lively one, and it can always assist me, I assure you," said the captain, stroking his moustache. "Let me tell you of a little game of hazard I participated in near the military stations on the Malabar coast. Four of us in the party—myself, two officers, and a moody fellow, who, for political offences, had served for several years in the French galleys. Had our card table out on the grass under the coffee and date-tree. Moody Frenchman got broke, and pulled out a queer little steel seal, or brand. Says he:

"From peculiar associations with this little thing which I purloined from my captors during my political bondage, I value it more highly than anything else in the world. I will stake it against your guineas."

"We laughed, for the thing was worthless to us whatever it might be made for. But Frenchy was a good fellow, and we stood him in. He had worse luck than a baby; and Major B— won his trinket."

"Take it, and much good may it do you," he cried, in a rage. "You have won the brand of the Fleur de Lis, which is impressed on the arms of galley slaves."

"The major laughed at his bad temper, and was picking up the brand to examine it, when he suddenly sprang to his feet with a scream of pain, staggered from the table, and fell to the earth, stone-dead."

"What was the matter with him?" cried several of the company.

"Bitten by a cobra di capello which had crawled through our legs and under the table. Oh, my lord, my imagination can always supply me with fictitious excitement during a game of cards. But what's the matter? You, as well as Madame La Grande, appear to be strangely annoyed. Perhaps my harmless anecdote was a little out of order so early before breakfast."

"It is simply a matter of taste, captain," said his lordship, shrugging his shoulders, and recovering his self-possession, which had been momentarily staggered.

Ralph Romney declined to remain to breakfast.

"Well, you shall come early this evening, and give us our revenge!" cried Diggs. "You know the old ditty:

"I'll have my revenge for a merry change,  
When the dice are tenderer toys;  
A shilling, a crown, or a guinea, down,  
As we rattle the ivory boys."

"No, gentlemen, no more play to-night, I beg of you," said Lord Falkland, looking really annoyed. "Ladies, haven't I you on my side?"

Of course he had—with perhaps the exception of the countess—and Lady Florence most heartily gave in her support.

"You promised, you promised, my lord!" cried Captain Diggs, regardless of the opinion of the ladies. "Do you not remember what you said when we were in the second game of cards last night?"

"Yes," said his lordship, slowly and reluctantly. "I did promise, though I had forgotten it."

"But we had not, good my lord!" cried the captain, following Romney to the terrace, after he had tendered his adieux. "Good-bye, squire!" they

heard him cry out, in his swift, airy way. "Be sure to come early, and you shall have a glorious revenge!"

Lady Florence—not unnoticed by Madame La Grande—looked at Lord Falkland with more pleasure and respect than he had ever inspired her with before, for he walked the floor uneasily, and bit his lip with well-simulated vexation.

#### CHAPTER XVIII.

"What sort of rioters be these, fellow?"  
"Dicers and wicked ones, my lord."  
"Send for an officer and have them whipped!"  
"My lord, I dare not. These be gentlemen  
Of some degree, albeit their propensities  
Have led them to these vicious courses."

*The Curse of Gold.*

SHORTLY after the departure of the young squire from the castle both Lord Falkland and Madame La Grande, who, it is needless to say, were considerably alarmed by the innuendoes thrown out by Captain Diggs, in his charming anecdote of the card party in the jungle, seized an opportunity to sound him thoroughly; and the captain, by his stout assertions that the story was perfectly true, and by his looks of stupid inquiry when they hinted that he might have meant something beyond his anecdote, succeeded in convincing them that the brand of the Fleur de Lis and the cobra di capello were mere coincidences of the story.

To tell the truth, the captain had tested his powers against theirs thoroughly, was satisfied that he was their superior, and loved to alarm them needlessly—even while professing to work in concert with them.

His only fear was that Lady Florence would lose confidence in the sincerity he had declared—so great would appearances be against him in the double rôle he was performing.

But this could not be helped, and he hoped for the best.

Lady Florence resolved to be present at the gaming in the evening. Since she could not prevent it, she had an instinctive feeling that mischief was meant to Ralph Romney, on the part of Captain Diggs, with, perhaps, the assistance of others.

Although greatly embarrassed—although she could not interfere openly—she was sure that her presence would have some effect upon the parties if foul play were intended; and she felt doubly strong in that Madame La Grande had promised her her cordial co-operation.

As for Lord Falkland, she was not yet quite sure of the sincerity of his apparent friendship for Ralph. Poor Florence! guileless and innocent as she was, she yet thought that she was concealing quite a shrewd little plot of her own when she was but walking into the meshes of the net that had been prepared for her.

She even thought to improve her strength of mind for the coming trial by giving little Annette another scolding for presuming to chat in an unknown tongue to Doctor Gipsajoker, and for running in the woods at night; when the truth was that little Annette kept up a line of constant communication between the castle and Judith's tent.

Play began soon after supper in a rubber of whist between Lady Florence and Lord Fitz-Grammont on one side against the countess and Doctor Gipsajoker.

The countess made good her boast of the morning by winning back some of the guineas she had lost; though Doctor Gipsajoker's gipsy habit of small cheating came near getting them both in hot water.

Then Ralph Romney arrived, and the play became general, Captain Diggs and the countess playing whist against Lord Falkland and the young squire.

The two latter lost constantly, until at last his lordship, with a glance of mingled resentment and suspicion at Diggs, declared that he would play no longer.

"Your lordship and your partner had better play off, then," said Diggs, "and we'll play hazard. This is too slow for me."

They did so, and the entire weight of the losses fell upon Ralph—a matter of twelve pounds. But he laughed lightly.

"I, like you, prefer hazard, my dear captain," said he. "There is something in the rattle of the dice and the swift interchange of the cards that is far more lively and interesting."

The hazard-board was brought, and shortly after a number were interested in the jingling of the dice. Captain Diggs was the dealer, and under his skilful sleight-of-hand, as he shuffled the pack, the cards seemed to fairly melt into each other, and when he dealt them they flew hither and thither with the rapidity of thought. Falkland was also an experienced dealer, and the pretty countess had a way of her own of making her little white hands busy with the shifting pasteboards; but they appeared as children compared with Diggs.

Romney won largely, and both Falkland and the countess, as well as other players, lost, to the advantage of the beaming captain.

"Will neither you nor Madame La Grande join us, Lady Florence?" said Diggs. "See what fortune Romney is having! We'll all go back to London fleeced of our pocket-money if he keeps this up much longer."

"No," said Lady Florence, who had stopped play, and was secretly observing Ralph's flushed and animated face, "we shall not play any more. And, as far as any one's winning is concerned, I hold that that is not always a reason why he should continue his play."

"What!" said Ralph, looking up, "you would pinch your game when in luck, and play heavily when fortune is against you?"

"By no means, Ralph," she replied, with a meaning look; "but I would consider well whether or not it was meant by others that I should win."

He looked puzzled, and continued playing, while Lady Florence cast a glance of mingled suspicion and indignation at the captain. The latter, however, was by no means put out of countenance, and again and again the cards melted under the manipulation of his swift white hands.

"Countess, your luck is changing," said he, coolly dragging in the countess's money. "Ha! my lord! I have you, likewise! And De Vavasour too! Why, fortune begins to smile sweetly. You play heavily, Romney, but I'll double the stakes. So; and you have lost."

The captain seemed to be a veritable wizard, so rapidly did the tide of chance turn in his favour. The others lost as steadily and as rapidly.

Led by the countess, who appeared really mortified by her losses, one after another they withdrew from the game, until only Lord Falkland, Romney, and Diggs remained at the board—the latter with a great heap of coin and notes before him, and still beaming lightly, as if careless of whatever future favours the fickle goddess might extend to him.

At length Lord Falkland struck the table with his clenched hands, and declared, with a most meaning look of distrust at Diggs, that he would play no more of "that sort of game."

The captain paused, with the cards suspended in his hands, and a hard, dry smile upon his lips.

"Of course," said he, "my Lord Falkland would not so far forget the laws of hospitality as to insinuate that I have dealt otherwise than fairly?"

"Of course," replied his lordship, his lips curling ironically; "of course Captain Diggs would not so far forget the same laws, upon his part, as to deal otherwise than fairly."

"Let us have the dice alone," exclaimed Romney, whose losses now amounted to more than half of the large sum he had brought with him. "Come! It is even quicker than hazard."

"Dice be it then, and the first raffle in every case!" assented the genial captain; and, Falkland also assenting, they began to cast the dice for heavy stakes.

Diggs appeared to have bewitched the dice even more thoroughly than the cards. Even when he did lose, it would seem as though he did so more for the sake of appearance than anything else, and sometimes he would win in rapid succession pool after pool, making fearful inroads into the means of his opponents.

It was observed by the lookers-on that Lord Falkland made several signs to Ralph to withdraw; and that, whenever he gave any indications of following such counsel it was always the gay bantering of the captain which kept him to the game.

It was late in the night when the game closed, the young squire rising, flushed and nervous, without a farthing of the three hundred and odd pounds he had brought from the steward's strong-box in Romney Manor, and his lordship also declaring that he had no more ready money.

"Luckily," said the latter, yawning; "luckily the day after to-morrow is quarter-day. If my rent-roll was not a large one, I could not be able to stand this peculiar playing. Heigh-oh! I have lost five hundred pounds."

As Captain Diggs pocketed his winnings his lips became compressed, and his face as hard as if carved out of stone.

"You say 'peculiar game,' my lord, and it is not the first time you have cast insinuations against my honour," said he. "You do so in the presence of ladies, and in your own house, where I am your guest. There are other times and fitter places for a reply to such an insinuation, which I shall not fail to take advantage of; but be assured I shall not imitate your want of taste by replying to them at present."

"My dear captain," said Ralph, breaking in with a laugh, "I certainly would not join in such insinuations. I would gladly have won your money, and you have won mine. That is all."

"My dear Romney," said his lordship, looking at him with a pitying smile, "I do not wish to wound your feelings; but I am much older and know far more of the world than you. A little more experience on your part in the sort of game we have indulged in this evening will, I trust—"



"My lord! my lord!" cried the captain, white to the lips, and springing to his feet, with his hands clenched, "do not make me also forget that we are in the presence of ladies."

The Countess of Arundel looked on with a smile, as if enjoying a scene at a theatre, but Lady Florence, shocked and indignant, gave a little cry of terror, and with the other ladies hurried to the farther extremity of the room.

Lord Fitz-Grammont, Sir Plantagenet de Vavasour, Percy Redesdale and Hugo Withers hastened to interfere between the gentlemen with earnest remonstrance and soothing words. Some hollow words of apology were muttered, and the ladies began to retire.

As Ralph Romney was saying good-night Lady Florence observed that his cheek was flushed with shame, which caused her the more willingly to permit him to lead her a little apart from the rest.

"Oh, can you forgive me, dear lady?" said he, struggling with his embarrassment. "I feel that I share the responsibility of this scene which has been such an insult to you. Never before have I fully appreciated the demoralization of this vicious pastime, and now it fills me with grief and mortification. Can you forgive me?"

"Ah, Ralph," said the lady, gently, but with something like tears in her voice. "I must forgive you even while I deplore your weakness in not seeing that you are the dupe of bad and designing men."

"Nay, you are too suspicious," said he, smiling. "Lord Falkland, at any rate, despite our first disagreeable relations, appears to have become my friend and well-wisher."

"I trust that he is—nay, I almost think so. But, Ralph,"—she hesitated, struggling with reserve and pride, and then went on, frankly—"but, Ralph, you will be in London with us, and—do not misconstrue me—if frequent visits on your part to Falkland House, or any amount of participation in my society while there can warm my old playmate from his perilous passion for play, I need only say that he is welcome to take advantage of both."

She had forced herself to say this much, though it came from her heart and brought a blush to her cheeks; but there was nothing but earnestness and goodness in the half-smile that curled her trembling lip and made her blue eyes dewy and soft.

She did not restrain him as he caught her hand. "Thank you, thank you! You were always kind and good," he exclaimed, with emotion. "Oh, be sure that I will take advantage of your noble, your generous invitation."

This had passed so hurriedly that it had been noticed by no one, save Madame La Grande, who instantly glided over and put an end to the conversation, which she had partially overheard, and the young squire took his departure.

He was calling for his groom, to bring up his horse, when a hoarse voice behind accosted him, and he turned to encounter Captain Diggs, who had followed him out on the lawn from the terrace. "Excuse me, my dear Romney," said Diggs, "but a certain doubt, or rather fear, caused me to venture upon this step. In the first place you had, I am sure, no sympathy with Falkland in his insulting insinuations against my honour?"

"Certainly not! I told you as much, captain."

"Then," said the other, apparently very much relieved. "I shall have no hesitation in speaking out at once, and running the risk of offending you. Confound it, I can't beat about the bush! You lost heavily to-night; is it going to cramp you? Will it cause you to be inconvenienced for money for a few days?"

Ralph drew himself up. "There, there! by George, I knew I would offend you!" blurted out the captain. "Only, having plenty of money in London myself, and thinking that perhaps your quarter-day was not so good at hand as that of other estate-owners, the loan of a few hundreds might assist you for a few days, I thought; that was all. Forgive me! I meant nothing but kindness."

"There was something so frank, so hearty in the manner he extended his hand to him that Romney could not refuse it."

"You're too deep for me; I can't make you out, captain," said he. "Indeed, every one around me seems so full of inconsistencies and contradictions that I am in a constant whirl of doubts and speculation. But I will be equally frank with you. I shall have difficulty in keeping out old steward's mouth shut for a few days, until next rent-day."

"Say no more about it!" cried the captain, pulling out his wallet. "Will five hundred do?"

"It's more than double what is necessary."

"Make assurance doubly sure, and take it, then," said the captain, counting the money into his hand. "I only let you have it on condition that you say nothing about returning it until you are quite ready. Good-night, my dear boy! We will meet often in London, I hope."

"I trust so. Here comes my sleepy groom with the two horses. But tell me your quarrel with Lord Falkland will come to nothing serious?"

"He shall apologize, and amply, or give me satisfaction. At any rate, I go to London to-morrow. *Au revoir.*"

## CHAPTER XIX.

At last I know thee—and my soul,  
From all thine arts set free,  
Abjures the cold, consummate art  
Shrined as a soul in thee—  
Master of falsehood deeply learned  
In all heart treachery.

Anon.

LADY FLORENCE did not retire at once, but sat up, endeavouring to distract her painful thoughts with a new novel, lent her by Miss Felicia Withers; but she was restless and feverish, and much annoyed at the unaccountable absence of her maid, whom she had expected to find awaiting her.

Most of the other inmates of the castle retired to rest soon after the departure of the young squire, with the exception of Lord Falkland and Captain Diggs.

These worthies met in his lordship's private library, with a heartiness and cordiality that was in singular contrast with their demeanour towards each other during the evening.

"You're a better actor than I could have given you credit for," said his lordship, lighting a cheroot and pouring out some wine. "Gad! but I thought you were really angry when you sprang to your feet there, so white and savage. But I question your prudence in lending that calf five hundred pounds, after fairly fleeing him of it."

"You wrong me there, my lord," said the other, also helping himself to the generous liquor and a cigar. "By Jove! the Romney estate is only second to your own in County Kent, and must be taken by slow approaches and not attempted by a *coup de grace*. But here is your own money, my lord."

His lordship coolly pocketed the money that was counted out to him, and then, after scrutinizing his companion for some moments, said:

"You're a deep one, captain, and no mistake. I know not what may be your animus in this affair, but I know that it is something more than a mere desire to play the part of gipsy woman's jackal. As far as I am concerned, however, you appear to have decidedly the best of the bargain, if you do the best of the work."

"To be sure I do," replied Diggs, complacently; "but when the idiot is thoroughly scooped—when everything is mortgaged to the last farthing, you get Romney Manor, Romney Park, and every farm connected with them, for a mere song! Faith under the circumstances, you can afford to let me have the ready cash."

"Ah!" said Falkland, stroking his moustache, "what an estate will then be Falkland Towers! By Heaven! there's scarcely an earl in the United Kingdom who would not be glad to exchange his earldom for my barony then. I suppose we can get through with our dupe this winter; do you think so?"

"Yes, if we are properly supported. How many of them at present here belong to you? The countess and Withers are two, are they not?"

"Yes, I have bought both of them, body and soul. I have some fear of the countess, she is so shrewd and bold; but her being a real countess is her best recommendation. Madame will have an eye on her, if she undertake to kick in the doors. I've got De Vavasour, also, body and soul, and his rank is also genuine. Gad, if it hadn't been he'd have been in the hulks years ago. Redesdale, as we now call him, is my led captive, and has been ever since I saved him from the guillotine of Paris by running him out of the country. Theascal was convicted of forgery and attempted murder—but I saw something useful in the dog—managed to get him an opportunity to escape, and he has been my slave ever since. Then I don't know about the Fitz-Grammonts. They are shrewd and can be useful, but are both so tricky that there is no telling how far to trust them. Of course you know who they are. By Heaven! what was that? Did you not hear a voice?"

Falkland sprang to the door, which was a little ajar, and peered out into the dark passage, but could see no one.

"I did think I heard something like a sob or a mean," said Diggs, going out into the passage. "Here comes some one towards us."

It proved to be Madame La Grande, however, and she had met no one, she said.

"It must have been a freak of the fancy, then," said Falkland. "Come in, and I will lock the door."

"And I will take a glass of wine with our brave captain," said Madame La Grande, entering, "and compliment him on the charming manner he carried out his rôle of the evening. By my life, I count the game as already ensnared."

"You make me blush, my dear madam," said the captain, touching his glass to hers. "Here is suc-

cess to our enterprise, and confusion to the enemies of the house of Falkland. "Why do you start?" he added, looking with well-acted wonder from the woman to the man. "Surely, my dear madam, you will pledge me in confusion to the enemies of his lordship here?"

"Oh, to his lordship here, certainly," replied the lady, quickly recovering from a slight confusion she had betrayed. "But you have such a strange way of saying things, captain—such a queer manner of emphasizing your words. One would think that you always meant some implication—that is, something deeper and farther beyond your actual words."

"Nonsense!" cried Diggs, filling another glass gaily; "only your imagination, my dear madam—only your imagination, I assure you! Then the Fitz-Grammonts," he added, turning to his lordship, "the people we were speaking of before this interruption, are not the thing, eh?—not really of the nobility, eh?"

Lord Falkland and Madame La Grande both laughed immoderately.

"What?" exclaimed the former. "And you haven't even suspected them to be frauds? You recollect hearing of the proprietor of a certain roulette den being nabbed, convicted, and condemned to the hulks, and how prettily he was house-poused out of Newgate by the handsome 'lady of rank' who turned out to be his accomplice?"

"Yes. You don't mean to say—you wouldn't have me believe—"

"Yes, I do; yes, I would!" said his lordship, poking him shyly in the ribs. "Gad, but they disguise well, don't they? They are very decent, very decent, indeed, as I said before, but tricky—deuced tricky, and we must be careful about trusting them."

"But for your part, captain," said Madame La Grande, somewhat jeeringly; "you have taken up your case so earnestly that you have sadly fallen from grace where you were ambitious to make a different impression. Depend upon it our little chit of a Lady Florence holds you in holy horror."

The captain shrugged his shoulders.

"You know what I told you in the gipsy's tent," said he, with a leer that would have done credit to an amorous satyr. "If his lordship ever sees fit to abandon the idea of espousing the child, I shall willingly take her off his hands."

"It will not take long to decide," said Falkland, walking up and down the room, and his brow darkening. "She begins to think better of me every day, but the hold of that bumpkin, Romney, is still strong upon her. We shall see, we shall see!"

"If she won't be glad to marry any one, to save her reputation, after she has been taken through the round of our set in London, you may call me as much of an idiot as she is," said Madame La Grande, with a hard, cold smile upon her lips.

They were again interrupted by a noise in one of the passages without—this time the unmistakable voices of angry men.

Lord Falkland opened the door quickly, and they all ran into the hall in time to see Doctor Gipsajoker and Hawks, the steward, throttling each other at the farther end, and also the flutter of a woman's dress disappearing around an angle.

"What's the meaning of this disturbance at this unseasonable hour?" exclaimed his lordship, in his most authoritative tones, and striding up to the spot, accompanied by the two others. "Hawks, you villain, how dare you assault one of my guests?"

But the guest appeared abundantly able to take care of himself. His lordship had scarcely spoken when the beetled-browed steward received a smart blow between the eyes from the doctor's fist, followed by another and another, in the best Brummagem style, which sent him staggering ruefully against the wall, while the doctor, at a motion from Diggs, gracefully desisted from pushing his advantage.

"The gentleman ain't no gentleman at all," blubbered Hawks, "but a swell, with fake whiskers, as goes round arter midnight, walking with my lady's maid, little Annette, in the woods and copse."

"Be quiet, you drunken rascal!" said the doctor, speaking with a slow, clerical solemnity, in ridiculous contrast with his brazen and sturdy performance of a moment before. "My lord, as my cousin will tell you, I have contracted with the gipsies in this vicinity for a supply of certain kinds of poisonous herbs, with which I design to make a number of experiments. While in their camp to-night I took advantage of a pot of boiling water to make an experiment off-hand. This kept me a long time, and when I was about to hasten back to the castle I met the volatile young woman who is my Lady Florence's maid coming out of the gipsy Judith's tent. I reproved her for her imprudence, and ordered her to return to the castle with me at once. This drunken menial let us in at the servants' door, and gave me some of his insolence. I paid no attention to it until he followed me through the hall."



## [PARTING WORDS.]

when I turned upon him, as any gentleman would have done."

"Ha, ha, ha! Gentlemen as wears false beards!" exclaimed the steward, who was really somewhat the worse for liquor; but a threatening gesture from his lordship quieted him.

"I hope you will excuse the insolence of my servant this time, doctor," said he, courteously, "and I promise you it shall not occur again."

The doctor—who had in reality been to Madame Judith to acquaint her with the doings of the night as respected Ralph Romney—bowed affably.

"As for false beards," he said, with a learned and placid smile, "I suppose I have worn a hundred different ones in my pursuit of science, in as many different countries, and would scarcely feel myself without one."

He bowed and withdrew.

"Go to bed at once, you rascal!" exclaimed his lordship, pushing the steward roughly. "You shall hear something more of this to-morrow."

"Oh, I know I be a rascal, my lord!" said Hawks, whose swollen eyes had put him in anything but an amiable humour. "But I ain't agoin' to be punched and mauled around this 'ere castle like a hound, I ain't. It's almost as bad treatment as you and I experienced when we was snug and tight at Bot—"

Before the completed word left his lips Lord Falkland's hands were upon his throat, and his bullet head was being banged up against the hard wall in a manner more lively than agreeable.

"There!" cried his lordship, flinging him from him, while Captain Diggs laughed immoderately. "Begone! dog! cur! rat! and come to me in the morning with a penitent face, or I'll have you roasted alive!"

The steward retired, shaking his head and muttering to himself.

His lordship recovered himself with an effort, as the trio returned to the library.

"That," said he, turning to Captain Diggs, with a smile, "is one of the subjects in whose special behalf I should like once more to enlist the services of Gipsy Jock."

"I am inclined to think that my eccentric relative, the doctor, could operate upon that subject pretty well himself," said the captain, dryly.

"How about your doctor?" said his lordship. "Is he a real physician?"

"Not exactly," said the captain; "but I'll answer for it that he studied the fine art of poisoning for years among the Thugs of Java and the professional poisoners of India. In fact the practice of the art amounts almost to a monomania with him."

Lord Falkland and Madame La Grande exchanged a quick, significant glance.

"Hem!" said his lordship, clearing his throat and lowering his voice, "do you think he might be made useful in case—in case of our having to have recourse to—a last resort?"

"Of course he might," said Diggs, smiling. "Let us trust though that no such necessity will arise; but, at all events, the solemn doctor belongs to me as I belong to you. We're all in the same boat. But I see the gray of the early morning through the window there. I shall take a turn or two on the terrace and then to bed. Good-morning."

The captain got his hat and cloak in the great hall, and in a few moments he was restlessly pacing the terrace in the fresh, cool air of the early morning. It seemed to have but little freshness for him. His whole countenance changed.

The free, nonchalant air deserted it, and it became haggard, anxious and worn.

As his eye caught a glimpse of the lamplight which still streamed from the library window out into the still gloaming of the coming day, a terrible, desperate, consuming hate distorted his features, and his entire frame quivered with emotion.

"How long, how long, oh, Heaven," he muttered, raising his clenched hand on high, "how long before the wronged are righted and the wicked ones cast down? Oh, grant me patience to still play the hypocrite with these fiends until the hour of vengeance is at hand!"

He turned as he quivered in the utterance of his passion, and grew calmer as his eye fell upon another ray that came from another window in a different quarter of the castle, for he knew it proceeded from Lady Florence's room.

"Poor girl," he muttered; "poor, snared, beset, envired, hampered thing, she too is restless and miserable. No wonder, for was ever yet a young and beautiful life so beset with scorpions and serpents? so shrouded at its very outset with woe and desolation? I cannot, dare not as yet prove to her that I but play a part for her deliverance as well as for my own sake. And in the interim what must she think of me? Of what villainess must she not deem me capable?"

The thought seemed to madden him beyond endurance, for after a few more hasty strides he darted into the castle and sought his own room.

Well might he groan to think how vile poor Lady Florence must deem him, but he could scarcely dream of the extent of the infamy with which he was at that moment connected in her mind, as she lay upon her face in her lonely chamber, with the traces of scalding tears upon her cheeks, sleepless misery in her brain, and dull, aching despair at her heart.

Here was the moan, the stifled sob in the passage,

which had startled Falkland and Diggs in the early part of their conversation in the library. Wearied with her book, and uneasy about the absence of Annette, she had quitted her room, descended the staircase, and gone to the quarters in the rear of the castle occupied by the female domestics in search of her.

Not finding the object of her quest, she was returning to the staircase through the main hall, when, upon crossing a smaller passage, she saw a light streaming through the chinks in the library door. This surprised her greatly, and presently hearing the voices of Falkland and Diggs in loud and seemingly very friendly talk, with frequent use of Ralph Romney's name, her surprise was augmented so much as to impel her to draw nearer. She only heard enough to discover the nature and apparent foulness of the conspiracy against young Romney—not as against herself—on the part of the two pretended enemies, and then fright, overwhelming terror at the labyrinth of deceptions that appeared to be closing around her, wrung from her heart that moan and sob which had startled them.

But alarmed for her life should she be discovered—she now believed Diggs and Falkland capable of anything, even murder—she had fled down the passage round the turn of the angle too quickly for them; and she luckily retreated by the same way she had reached the door, else she must have encountered Madame La Grande, who arrived, as we have seen, at the library as the gentlemen came out into the passage.

Lady Florence regained her room in a condition bordering upon frenzy. She threw herself—as a man never does, but as almost every woman does, once or twice in a lifetime—flat upon her face on the couch, gathered her arms strainingly around the pillow, buried her face in its yielding depths, and, while the hot tears burst from her heart, and the long, quivering, rending sobs convulsed her frame, gave herself up to the desolating terrors that were rife in breast and brain.

She felt herself but a puppet in the grasp of the wicked and powerful—a little fly in an inexorable web. If they were playing thus for Romney's wealth, what might they not have in view for her? Ere this she had more than suspected that all the guests were his lordship's creatures.

Was not Madame La Grande one of them as well? Was even little Annette other than a spy upon her?

She could only moan and sob.

There was not a ray of comfort or hope to dispel the misery, the fear, the desolation of her shrouded life.

(To be continued.)





[THE REVELATION.]

## THE FOOT TICKLER.

BY THE AUTHOR OF

*"Evelyn's Plot," "Darcy's Child," "One Sparkle of Gold," &c., &c.*

## CHAPTER XXVI.

What, though abroad perchance I might appear  
Harsh and austere

To those who on my leisure would intrude,  
Unasked and rude,

Gentle at home amidst my friends I'd be,  
Like the high leaves upon the lofty tree—

Smooth and unarm'd.

"My friend—since you will not give me the power to call you by any other name—tell me how I can possibly repay you for your care and patient watching," said the feeble but earnest voice of one who had evidently been the victim of deep and prolonged suffering.

The place where the invalid was sheltered was a rustic but spacious apartment, in a large, low cottage villa, surrounded by a deep verandah that sheltered it from the rays of the burning Italian sun, and near the verandah stood the couch on which the wasted form reclined.

At the other end of the room, and close to a fire that was rendered necessary alike by the chilliness of age and the susceptibility of convalescence belonging to the tenants of the chamber, was the venerable Alphonso, the protector and refuge of Norma d'Albano in her extremity of terror at Grantley Neville's danger and Eustace Villiers's crime.

He was engaged in preparing some condiment either for medicine or cordial to the invalid, and for a minute or two his attention appeared too much engrossed to reply to the question of his companion.

But as the task was brought to a conclusion, and the contents of the bright, clean pan poured into a basin of china that would have driven a connoisseur frantic by its priceless beauty, he approached Grantley Neville—for it was he who lay there like one risen from the dead—and placed the refreshment before him.

"There," he said, "eat that, young man; take it to the very last drop, and while you are thus reviving your strength I will administer what satisfaction I can to your restless anxiety. But my labours will be in vain if you do not calm yourself sufficiently to allow the restorative to produce its full power and effect."

Lord Grantley smiled sadly as he languidly obeyed. "I should be ungrateful indeed were I to resist your slightest wish, my preserver," he said, as he slowly sipped the delicious, cordial-like soup. "But

I feel now that my brain is clear and strong enough to bear the trial of recalling the past to mind and of learning the truth of what has happened while thought and consciousness were dormant. And I believe that I should rally more quickly if the mazy mist were removed from my memory and I could dwell on something more definite than the dim recollections of what preceded my terrible illness."

"Perhaps," said the old man, cautiously, "it may be so, but a young and impetuous nature is ever prone to deceive itself, and your very anxiety for information is father to the belief that it would help your recovery. However, I can see that you are past the great danger of relapse," he added, with a half-smile. "The blood was too freely drawn from your veins to allow much fear of fever and excitement. So I will satisfy in part your demand; but first let me hear what you can recall and what you will confess of the past. I mean as to the cause of your peril, your quarrel with Mr. Villiers."

Grantley's pale cheek flushed slightly at the question, though the blood that strove to mantle there did but give a faint, sickly colouring to the whiteness of the wan cheeks.

"You have a right to know the deepest recess of my heart, so far as the events which have cost you so much trouble and watching are concerned," he said, "but there is another name in the tale which I have no right to breathe. It is enough that the resentment which Eustace Villiers gratified so savagely was excited by jealousy, and that a lady was the innocent cause of the deadly animosity he displayed."

"One whom you loved in common with himself?" asked Alphonso, calmly.

"No, old man, no," exclaimed Grantley, with a sudden kindling of his white face. "His was not love, or he could not have been so base—so cruel—so unjust. But I know not, alas! whether he had any right to control the actions and the friendships of the fair and gifted creature who was outraged by his suspicions and his dastardly revenge."

"And you—did you love her?" asked Alphonso, quietly. "Nay, answer me frankly; I have long since passed the age when such feelings are of personal interest to me, but still I can comprehend and allow for their force. I can tell you nothing, nor understand nothing of your real position and trustiness unless you deal candidly with me. Answer me as you would have spoken on that bed of approaching death on which you so recently were stretched—did you love truly, and from the depths of your heart, Norma d'Albano?"

Grantley started painfully.

"Then you know—you have been told all? For Heaven's sake, do not keep me in suspense. Has her name been dragged forward?—has she suffered on my account from that?"

"Hush, hush! Calm yourself, or you shall know nothing, and I will leave you in solitude till you are more rational," interrupted the old man, warningly. "So far as you and your immediate affair are concerned, there has been far less speculation and gossip than could have been believed had not one so skilful been the agent in averting inquiry and suspicion. Nor do I know that the Signorina Norma's name was breathed as the real origin of the mysterious disappearance of Lord Grantley from the fair city where he had been but a passing sojourner."

"Thank Heaven, at least for that," said Neville, sinking back on his cushions. "But then how did you know that she—"

"That she was the object of your pursuit, and that you were exposing her to cruel insult and wrong?" put in Alphonso, firmly. "It matters not, young man, so long as I do but speak the truth in sober sadness and concern for her and for you, in whom I have learned to take an interest while nursing you back from death's very grasp for her sake."

"Then is it possible that she was the agent in bringing me hither—that she did in truth return my love?" gasped the young man, in a choking, agitated voice, which told of its genuine emotion.

"She was your real preserver. She brought you here, or rather summoned me to your aid, and she furnished ample means for me to carry out my poor skill in restoring you from the very grave," returned Alphonso, calmly. "But as to love—why, to speak the truth, I have no belief that she cherished any such tender weakness for you. And it can matter little now what were her feelings or her joys and sorrows."

"You do not, cannot mean it, old man! If you trifle with me even my deep gratitude could scarcely give me patience to forbear. And if it is as you would imply, I could almost curse you for my life. But it is not so—it is impossible. She is not dead—so young and gifted and adored."

"Then you did love her in real, manly truth?" said Alphonso, with a warning gesture. "Remember our compact—you shall know all when you have answered me truly from your very conscience."

"Yes, yes, Heaven is my witness that it is so—that I do love Norma, as I never could have believed I should worship woman's charms, and honour woman's noble gifts. She is a bright, pure and gifted being, the image of whom has floated before me during my hours of suffering and weakness. You tell me

she is my preserver. Heaven knows I would devote the life she has saved to her welfare and happiness."

"There is a ring of truth in your words, young man," returned Alphonso, "which makes me give them some credit, even before they are proved by the test which could alone distinguish the gold from the alloy. And that, alas, must be a very different one from what you intend. Young man, you rightly interpreted my words. Norma d'Albano is no more," he added, solemnly.

Grantley groaned aloud in the intensity of grief, that was almost more than his weakened frame could bear.

"Dead, dead! Oh, Norma!" he moaned, clasping his hands. "And I cannot atone—cannot speak my gratitude, my love! Oh, it is too cruel—it cannot be true!"

"Nay, you must nerve yourself for exertion, if only for her sake, and to prove yourself worthy, at least, of having loved her and been the object of her interest and her noble care," said Alphonso, firmly. "It is no fitting tribute to weakly lament, instead of acting like a man, and if needful avenging the fate she has suffered."

"You do me injustice. I will do all when the first shock has passed," quivered the pale lips of the invalid. "Old man, you cannot enter into my feelings. A thousand friendships could not make up the sum of the love which now burns in my soul for her who is gone," he moaned, plaintively.

"Enough, enough," said Alphonso, more gently; "calm yourself, if only for her sake, and listen to me, quietly and rationally. There is much to be done ere she can be in some measure avenged, for unless there are caution and prudence and submission nothing can be done, except for actual ruin. Are you prepared to yield this to me, Lord Grantley, and to control your own impatience and bide your time, ay, and conceal your very knowledge of what has occurred for Norma's sake, and in gratitude to her and, if you will, to me?"

"Yes, yes, everything," said Grantley, eagerly. "Only speak—tell me what I can do, and what was the cause of her death, the lovely one. Surely he dared not, even he could not be so cruel, so brutal, where one so delicate and fair was concerned?"

"Oh, there are many kinds of murder," said Alphonso, quickly. "But I did not say that he, that is Eustace Nevillo, to speak the name in plain boldness, was the active and immediate cause of the catastrophe. However, when you have, in calm and deliberate truth and honour, given me the required promise, when you have asked your own impetuous nature whether it can submit to the restraints I would impose, then, and not till then, you shall have the truth—so far as I know it—laid bare before you."

Grantley lay silent for some minutes.

He seemed to comprehend the full import of the old man's words, and to feel there was too deep a stake at risk for sudden rashness.

"Tell me what will be needful—whether my honour will be in any degree imperilled by this secrecy and restraint of which you speak?" he said, at length. "I mean will it bring falsehood and shame on my name, and base plotting in my soul—for then, even for her sake, I could not risk becoming thus unworthy of her?"

"You are right," said the old man, calmly. "Nor do I trust you less because you thus hesitate. But it is needless. All I ask is that you shall preserve intact the knowledge I am about to impart to you under any circumstances of temptation, that you will be willing to sacrifice your own resentments, and to watch and wait till the moment for action arrives, and, once more, that you will not grudge the time, nor self-denial, nor, it may be, the money that might be required to fully complete the plans I have already formed! And in return I pledge my own word that no base, mean word or deed shall be required of you."

"It is enough," said Grantley, eagerly. "I promise, nay, I swear if you will, to do all you wish and share all your conditions, if that will serve to avenge Norma d'Albano's death and prove my gratitude and love. Now speak, for I am fevered with impatience, and burn to hear all the truth. Where—how did she die—and from what cause?"

Alphonso drew his chair nearer to him, and bending his head to the young man's ear he went on for some minutes to relate, in a low and earnest tone, the circumstances that he had promised to confide to his companion's keeping.

The young man listened as he would have done to a message from the other world, and when, at length, Alphonso had finished, he clasped his hands in earnest and solemn silence, as if registering a mental vow.

"Gracious Heaven," he said, in a low, hoarse tone. "Canst thou permit such things to be? Old friend, from this hour my very life is pledged to the task

you set before me, and, by Heaven's help, we shall succeed!"

"Yes, yes, with patience and care," said the old man, warningly. "Else all will be lost, without hope or appeal."

#### CHAPTER XXVII.

Ah, I could love methinks with all my soul,  
But I see naught to love—naught save some  
score  
Of hissing, curled gallants, with words f' their  
mouths  
Soft as their mothers' milk. Ah, empty heart,  
Ah, palace, rich and purple chambered,  
When will thy lord come home?

It was the last drawing-room, and the fair and young *débutantes* of the fashionable world were crowding to its reception.

Such an occasion is the most brilliant and thronged of the season, since London is necessarily fuller than in the earlier months of the year; and, as it may be said, Fashion is in the very prime of her brief sojourn in the great metropolis. And never, perhaps, was the gay crowd more brilliant nor more dense the throng that assembled to gaze at the gay equipages and dresses than on the day in question, when the two so closely connected with Victor Mordant and his destiny were to be presented to the Gracious Majesty of England, and make their full *début* in the fashionable world. For on that day Celia Vyvian, the heiress of the Rookery, and Lady Barbara Fitzalan, the only child of the now Earl of Stanmore, were among the most distinguished of the *débutantes*.

And the difference of opinion as to the priority of claim was rather according to the taste of the critic than their contending merits.

"Seldom see finer girls than are here this morning," observed Lord Cornwall—a rather veteran peer—as he turned to one or two younger men who were his companions. "Not," he added, "that I consider the beauties of the present day are worthy to be mentioned with the belles of my young days; but still, as time goes, we have a very fair sprinkling here to-day."

"That's a splendid creature," he went on, as the carriage which conveyed Celia Vyvian and her chaperone came slowly past. "Not perhaps in her *première jeunesse*, but still a remarkably handsome girl, is she not, Mr. Villiers?"

Eustace, for it was the husband of the fair and unhappy Irene who was the person addressed, scarcely seemed to hear the question.

His eyes were riveted on the carriage as it paused in the dense crowd opposite to the spot where they stood, but rather with the enforced gaze of the basilisk's victim than the eager and voluntary feasting of an admirer of beauty.

Perhaps Celia rather felt than saw the gaze, for albeit her own glance appeared directed in a safe, onward course, there was a rapid, almost imperceptible turn of the quick, trembling eyelids that took in the whole aspect of her admirer in a second of time.

It was indeed a brief space for such results, a momentary encounter of eyes, which at once brought defiance, terror, hate, cupidity, and ambition to the souls of the pair who thus exchanged the language of looks.

But the consequences were of greater import than the work of ordinary months, and as Celia turned away and sank wearily back on her cushions every vestige of colour had faded from her cheeks, and the proud triumph that had lighted up her eyes was faded in blank and saddened alarm.

"My dear, what is it?" observed her chaperone, Lady Montfort. "Surely you are not going to faint. It would be so extremely absurd, more especially as your name is gone in and dress arranged. Do try and command yourself. Have you any salts?"

"Thank you, I do not need these," was the haughty reply as, by a strong effort of the will, the pulses were set beating at even more than their usual speed, and the blood rushed beamingly to the cheeks and lips. "I am not in the habit of making scenes," she added, impatiently.

"Quite right, my love, quite right—very bad taste, and does a girl no good. Quite a mistake to think it excites interest. A man might as well go to an hospital to choose a wife as want to bring a poor, helpless, complaining creature to his house and home. No, there is nothing like health and animation to catch or fix a man in these days. Only to be sure your fortune is already made—not like the little Barbara Fitzalan, whose pretty, bright face I caught a glimpse of just now."

The carriage moved on by a sudden advance in the line, and Eustace was left with his friends to contemplate the succeeding *débutantes*. But his face was utterly changed since the rencontre that had just taken place, and his self-control for the moment was less at command than Celia Vyvian's.

"Did you say that fine girl who passed us just

now was a Miss Vyvian?" he asked, when his emotion was somewhat conquered.

"Yes, and a newly made heiress," was the reply. "She came by her uncle's will into a very pretty estate called the Rookery, and I do not know how many thousands a year. I believe there was some 'hocus-pocus' in the affair so far as some cousin of the other sex was concerned, and the lady seems to have been admirably considerate on the occasion, for she is engaged to be married to the rival heir, who will thus get the beauty and her belongings as his proper share."

"Indeed, and what may be his name? The same as the young lady's I presume?" asked Eustace.

"No, he is the son of some sister of the old man's I believe; his name is Mordant—Victor Mordant. But here is the little fresh rosbud of the day, the sweet Barbara. Her father was at school with me, though some years my senior. Indeed I was his 'fag,' pursued the garrulous viscount. "And now there is his fair young daughter."

She did indeed look lovely, that charming little creature, in the fresh springtime of her youth, with a toilet that set off to the very utmost the rosbud beauty that needed little aid from art.

And as Victor Mordant, who was by his tyrant lady's command in waiting at the door of the palace, watched her arrival immediately after Celia's an involuntary compassion darted unbidden through his brain.

"Celia, my love, you do not look yourself, you are pale—agitated. For Heaven's sake, what is the matter?" he whispered, as his eyes turned from the bright, fine features of the earl's daughter to those of his own betrothed, which were already so far the prey of time that they could afford no transient ravages from any other hand.

"Nonsense, Victor; do not make a fuss. I am quite well, only I am not like some people, utterly indifferent to a scene like this," she returned, pettishly. "And I should like to get away as soon as possible. I hate that gazing, gaping stare, which every one seems to think lawful on these occasions."

"It is but homage to beauty," said Victor, trying to disguise his own annoyance, "is it not so, Barbara?" he added, as the young girl now joined them with Lady Rosford.

"No, I do not know that," laughed the girl. "I think it is just the impulse that makes every one like to comment on new faces; and I myself was excessively amused with some sentences I caught in the crowd as we passed. But I do think Miss Vyvian must have made one conquest already, for I distinctly heard a gentleman inquiring her whole history and name while we were left standing in the rank. He was a handsome, foreign-looking man—did you observe him, Miss Vyvian?—talking to an elderly man, an old friend of my father's, I believe, when accident attracted my attention to him."

"I really did not remark him," said Celia, coldly. "I do wish they would move on," she added, sharply, her face white with emotion as she spoke.

Victor dared not repeat his former comments, but he quietly offered his arm to the girl as the circle opened and led her towards the presence chamber.

The hand on his arm burned with heat though she shivered with a sudden chill as if a cold blast had swept over her, and had the occasion been less pressing Victor would certainly have insisted on her relinquishing any farther exertion and returning at once home.

But as he opened his lips to suggest some such alternative a hurried clasp of his arm, and a half-imporing, half-indignant flash in her dark eyes warned him to forbear.

"It is but a moment, I can do it," she whispered.

"Hush, hush—not a word, or I shall go frantic!" Certainly Victor had a vague suspicion of some sudden delirium that was threatening the agitated girl, some impending fever that would prostrate the proud frame.

But if so he hushed it kindly in the very depths of his own bosom, and silently supported the strangely trembling form to the very threshold of the presence of majesty.

The emergency seemed to give the sufferer an irresistible impulse.

Celia's paleness vanished beneath a rich vivid bloom, too brilliant and dazzling for health of mind or body, and the trembling weakness strengthened into a proud and graceful mien.

She was splendidly handsome for the moment as she bent the knee with a haughty humility that might have become a princess, and touched the fair hand extended to her with a fevered but reverent lip.

And if the admiring glance of royalty rested on her for a moment it was soon changed for a more gracious and softer smile as Barbara's sweet eyes were raised for a moment in speaking homage, and her young form bent with loveliness before her sovereign.



But ere the younger of the *débutantes* had passed from the presence chamber there was a cry, a confusion that only just escaped the august ears of the centre of the gay throng.

Celia Vyvian had fainted, and the crowd around were full of dismay and helplessness and vain offers of services to the invalid.

"Better take her home at once," said Lady Roseford, as Barbara tenderly bent over the insensible form. "Come, my love; you can do nothing more. Lady Montfort, pray take my salts—they are of extra strength."

"She ought not to have come if she was ill; it makes such disagreeable scandal to have these scenes," returned the lady, pettishly. "And I have no vocation for being a nurse. I am really afraid of these sudden attacks."

"Then I will go. I am not afraid," returned Barbara, eagerly. "Please let me go, dear Lady Roseford. I am sure papa would not be angry; and she is so ill, poor thing!"

The countess smiled fondly on her sweet young charge.

"You always get your way, *mignonne*, but I must confess it is not usually a very bad one. However, if there is room in Lady Montfort's carriage, and she will kindly send you home afterwards, I do not see any great impropriety in humouring your quixotic fancy."

Barbara needed no second bidding. She sprang forward in the wake of the sufferer, and reached the carriage in time to receive the invalid and arrange for her support and comfort during the brief transit home with the thought and tenderness of one twice her age.

Meanwhile Victor had rushed off in another direction for a physician, and as the carriage drove up in Grosvenor Square he was already waiting with a professional man of no little eminence, whose skill he had hastily secured.

Barbara fancied that there was a grave expression of surprise as Doctor Middleton examined the white, rigid face of his patient, to which the gay and dazzling dress and jewels gave an unnatural, ghastly contrast; and as Celia was, at last, placed on her sofa in the dressing-room, where that splendid toilet had been made, the young girl ventured to ask the meaning of the anxiety thus betrayed.

"Is it more than a fainting fit, Dr. Middleton?" she asked of the elderly man, who in a trifling illness of her own had attended her a few months before.

"I don't know, child. Is not a bad faint enough for you?" he replied, with the brief but kindly eccentricity that distinguished him.

"Quite," she returned, half smiling. "But you cannot deceive me, Dr. Middleton. You think there is something wrong, I am sure, than a swoon."

"I think there has been some shock to the nerves," he said, firmly, "which has been the cause of the attack; but I cannot tell yet the result. Pray what are you going to do, Lady Barbara, if it be so? What would it signify to you?"

"I would do all I could to serve and comfort her," replied the girl. "She has no sister—no near friend—and poor Victor will be so distressed."

"And pray who is Victor, may I ask?" returned the doctor, demurely.

"Mr. Mordant, the gentleman to whom she is engaged," said Lady Barbara, simply, "and who has been like a brother to me in early childhood."

"Very well, then, I just desire you will suspend your good offices for a while, and tell this same Victor to conquer his own anxieties till he has reason to indulge them," said the doctor, cynically. "I did not want two or three patients instead of one, and it is impossible to say what is coming. There, don't look as if I was a brute! If there turn out to be no danger you shall exercise your Sister of Mercy propensities at your leisure. If there be, I should provide one three times your age, and ten times as much use. So, you see, Miss Vyvian will not suffer by the exchange."

The implied forebodings of the doctor were but too sadly justified.

In answer to the numerous inquiries of the gay and fashionable friends whom the heiress had already made the alarming reply was vouchsafed that "Miss Vyvian was very ill with fever, but whether brain fever or typhus the physicians could not at present pronounce."

#### CHAPTER XXVIII.

Hark! the church bell, dull and hollow,  
Shakes another and from time.  
Through the church aisle, lighted dim,  
Chanted swells the ghostly hymn.  
Hear it, false one, when thou fliest;  
Shriek to hear it when thou diest.

"VILLIERS, is it really you?" said a voice but too terribly familiar to the guilty Eustace, as he lounged into a club to which the good-natured Lord Cornmore had introduced him.

It was but the second day after his rencontre with Celia Vyvian, and as the well-known voice of one he had long since believed dead sounded in his ears, and the pale but cheery features of Grantley Neville met his eyes, Eustace felt as if he lived in a dream, or had been transported to an invisible spirit-world.

He stood fairly transfixed for the moment, not even appearing to notice the hand that the young nobleman extended to him with a frank and kindly smile.

"Come, come, Villiers, you need not be so utterly dumfounded," resumed Lord Grantley. "I assure you I am real flesh and blood, and not, as you seem to suppose, a revenant from the dead. And as to our little affair over the water, let it be drowned in the Channel passage that people make such a fuss about just now, and let bygones be bygones."

Eustace had recovered his self-possession now, and he frankly and gracefully accepted the proffered hand with a bearing expressive of doubt and hesitation.

"You are determined to be victor now, if you were vanquished before," he said, earnestly. "And if it is any atonement to tell you that I have never known peace since my outrageous folly and passion ended so disastrously, I can most truly offer such an assurance. And we are friends then, once more—is it so, Lord Grantley?"

"Of course, of course; more particularly as the cause of our quarrel is removed for ever," said the young nobleman, with a genuine touch of sadness in his tone. "It was a terribly sudden catastrophe, was it not, Villiers?"

Eustace shivered slightly; he could not master the memories that were crowding on him.

"It was most terrible," he repeated, "and made a great sensation. She was so worshipped and run after at Naples."

"True; and she deserved it. She was about the loveliest and most gifted woman I ever saw," said Lord Grantley, quietly. "One to justify a little frenzy—ah, Villiers, unless there were some previous bond and attachment to guard the heart. 'Still I suppose the old adage is true, and there will be rivals even to the Norma spring up ere long. I hear that one is even now making a perfect furor at St. Petersburg, where the unhappy prima donna was to have sung this season, and that the Signorina d'Albano was actually nothing to this new girl in the Russian ideas."

"Indeed," returned Eustace, abruptly; "I haven't heard."

It seemed doubtful from the expression of his face whether he comprehended the words even now. In truth his brain was working busily on the bewildering apparition he beheld.

He would have given half his wealth to have known all, to have penetrated the mystery of the past, to ascertain who had rescued and nursed back to life that injured man, and to test the sincerity of his proffered friendliness to one who had well nigh taken his life.

But Eustace was too cautious for such queries, and after a while he roused himself sufficiently to take a more rational and disengaged tone.

"It is the way of the world, as you say, Neville—'*La reine est morte, vive la reine*,' is as true in these mimic sovereigns of the stage as the real monarchs of kingdoms. However, what is the name and the peculiarities of this new star?" he added, with apparent interest. "It has a melancholy fascination for me since she is connected with the unhappy one, whom I so jealously loved, so cruelly watched over," he went on, with a look of contrition that might well have touched the most resentful heart. "Neville, you are a noble fellow to pardon my mad rage and injustice."

"Scarcely so unjust as you make out, my good friend," replied Lord Grantley, frankly. "I was very desperately in love with Norma; and not being aware that you had prior claims I certainly went in pretty strongly for her. But as to this new girl I understand that her name is a rather peculiar and significant one—Magdalen, or, as the Italians would call it, 'Maddalena del Bosca.' But of course she will only be talked of by the first, and not the last, of the ominous appellations."

"And is she really a star, approaching poor Norma in brilliancy?" asked Eustace, calmly.

"So it is said, something wondrous, but of course it is only a report at present. I suppose some day we shall judge for ourselves, and, as you say, with especial interest. But, by the way, how and where is Miss Delaney? Is it true the father is dead?"

"Too true!" was the reply.

"And his daughter?" questioned Lord Grantley.

"Is at her own place during her deep mourning, at Delaney Court," returned Eustace, without even a quiver of the eyelids under the other's fixed gaze.

"I wonder you do not go in for her," resumed the young nobleman. "A beautiful girl and an heiress as she is."

"Perhaps I may some day," said Eustace, wearily. "At present such ideas are premature, she has felt her father's loss terribly."

"Was it true that she recovered her sight—there was some rumour of it? But really the Neapolitans are so utterly apathetic, except where some of their peculiar fanaticisms are concerned, that I could get no accurate information about strangers like the Delaneys, who were neither artists nor musicians."

"Rumour again is accurate for once," resumed Eustace, quickly. "Her sight is perfectly restored now."

"Then I shall, I daresay, congratulate you before very long," said Lord Grantley, with a perfectly inexplicable smile. "And as you can of course give pain to no one by such a marriage now there can be no obstacle. And if I were you I should push it on with every possible rapidity."

There was something that even the astute and worldly Eustace could not comprehend in the tone and manner of the young peer, and his reply was as vague as the uncertainty in which he was plunged.

"You are a man of the world, my lord. You may see that these serious bonds are not always to be contracted in haste, unless a man would repent at leisure, to use a familiar expression. And I for one cannot transfer my affections so lightly, even where beauty and wealth tempt the fickleness."

"Then do you really mean to say that you did love Norma d'Albano, that you meant to deal with her in all honour and truth?" was the sudden exclamation spoken with the sharp and unsuspected rapidity that well nigh daunts the listener, even when there are only innocence and unconsciousness of wrong.

"I did, yes, from my soul," was the reply, and the uplifted eyes and clasped hands seemed to endorse the assurance. "You of all others should comprehend the power she could exercise over the heart and soul, the magical fascination of her attractions over the whole nature."

"Then if she were alive you would have made her your wife?" asked Lord Grantley.

"She was so in my heart," returned Eustace, sadly. "It rested with herself whether she would become so in law. But, alas, alas, she will never be bride of mortal man now!"

An unbidden moisture rose to his eyes that seemed pledge for his truth.

"Well, there are perhaps as many fair ones left for us to cull from as any mortal memory can recall," returned Lord Grantley, more lightly. "And were I in a position to choose a wife I should not be long in making my election, if only from the lovely *débutantes* at the last drawing-room. By the way, did you hear of the romantic catastrophe that occurred after one of the presentations?"

"No," returned Eustace, carelessly. "Was it an elopement from the palace door? That would be even more memorable than Dorothy Vernon from Haddon Hall."

"Oh, dear no, by no means," was the answer of the nonchalant peer. "A very different ending of the *début*, more like a funeral than a bridal. The great heiress, Miss Vyvian, fainted dead off well nigh at the queen's feet, and has been lying ever since in a raving fever, as the runs."

"Indeed! Was the excitement too much for the delicate damsel?" asked Eustace, with an averted look. Grantley shrugged his shoulders.

"When was a beauty and an heiress ever killed by the public homage and a royal smile?" he said, carelessly. "No. There must be some deeper cause one would imagine for such a catastrophe. And, as people say she is engaged to be married to the man of her choice, there can be no disappointed love in the case. However, time will prove; and she will herself be not missed in the gay throng any more than the unfortunate Norma herself, especially when there are such pretty and wealthy rivals to the fore. That little Lady Barbara Fitzalan is in herself an object for at least a dozen admirers."

Eustace did not appear to hear the words, his eyes were fixed on the ground, and a deep and abstracted thought clouded his brow that had nothing of affection in it.

"Pardon me," he said, at length, as a slight gesture of his companion's recalled him to himself. "I was far away in mind, though present in body. Your sudden apparition has conjured up many a painful image of the past, and I feel stunned and humbled by your generous forgiveness of the cruel wrong I did you."

"It is swallowed up in far other and more engrossing memories," returned Lord Grantley, gravely. "Let it be henceforth a tabooed subject between us. I like as little to recall my sufferings as you do your rather sharp practice as a rival. That being settled I will wish you good-day," he went on, more lightly. "Let me see, what is your address? I may wish to communicate with you if I hear any tidings that are mutually interesting."

Eustace took out a card and wrote on it the name of his hotel.

"I shall be in town for another week or two," he said. "After that I may perhaps go abroad again, or at any rate travel for the rest of the summer. To me all places are alike now, and I soon get tired of this weary whirl men call pleasure."

Grantly nodded a careless good-bye, as the speaker turned away, but he did not catch the look nor the murmured words that followed.

"Insolent idiot! as if he could deceive or conquer me by his transparent sarcasms. Still there is danger lurking near, and it behoves me to be on my guard."

(To be continued.)

## THE FORTUNES OF BRAMBLETHORPE.

### CHAPTER XXIV.

WEEKS flitted by, passed by Captain Bramblethorpe in all sorts of gaieties. He made a great pet of Estelle, simply because his wife was so retiring and commonplace, and he wanted a fine, showy, witty woman at his dinner-table, and to take out to places of amusement. He had resigned his position in the army and his resignation had been accepted.

Spending a fortune not yet assured, he was yet quite contented, awaiting with confidence the return of his lawyer, and feeling in no particular hurry about anything.

He received two or three letters from Simmons, which a man of less sanguine temperament would have considered somewhat discouraging. The first one contained news of the death of the Countess Cecelia Rinaldini, occurring but a few days before the lawyer's arrival in Naples.

This was very unfortunate for them, as it prevented their obtaining her testimony, which they had looked for to replace the letters.

It very much increased Mr. Simmons's labours, as he had now to approach the family and heirs, when he could gain access to them, to learn if any proofs of the Count Steffazzi's existence could be found among the papers of the late countess.

This would be a work of some delay and great delicacy. He had, at the same time, to attempt to get traces of those friends who had been bribed to silence.

Also immediately upon learning of the lady's death he had despatched a trusty man of his own from London to Rio Janeiro to ascertain if Count Steffazzi, under the assumed name given on the cheque, was still there, and, if not, if he were dead, and, if he were dead, how long since.

All this complicated the business wonderfully, so that the suit could not, in all probability, be brought much before spring.

The lawyer was a sharp and industrious fellow, who entered into his client's case with zeal, but the client himself, trusting all things to the attorney, threw care to the winds, entering upon his winter's campaign of enjoyment in the highest spirits.

"We will have one jolly season, won't we, my dear?" he asked Estelle, about every day of the week.

"We will, indeed, and many returns of the same," she would answer, merrily, while she felt at heart like a person dancing over his own grave.

Oh, how she longed to creep back to Bramblethorpe Villa in the darkness of some starless night and steal a look at the face of the man she had injured.

The revenge which she had taken fell as heavily upon her as him.

The wit and brilliancy which she put on in company were like a painted mask, concealing her true features.

When alone she was nervously depressed and despondent. Dora had a trying time with her mistress when they were alone together.

Estelle, who had thought to find her revenge sweet, found it exceedingly bitter.

She could not take things so easily as the jolly captain.

She saw all his letters from his lawyer, and to her things did not appear to be prospering. And when Simmons said, in one of those, that he had encountered Lord Harry in Naples, and knew that he was there seeking some line of defence, her confidence dwindled dimly.

In her own mind she had not a doubt of the truth of matters, as she had stated them. She remembered distinctly much of the conversation between the Earl of Bramblethorpe and his Italian visitor when she was a child.

To this conversation she intended to swear, in court, as well as to all the circumstances relating to the letters.

She was indeed an important witness for the new claimant to the earldom; and he had no idea of let-

ting her leave him until the legality of his claim was decided.

The Countess Cecelia had come at last to her dying hour. Having lingered until days slipped into weeks the vital flame trembled in expiring lustre.

It was a clear December day, and the windows of her chamber were open to their widest, to admit the cool air to her wasted face, and that her great, sad eyes might turn once more to the blue sky before closing in darkness.

Her friends and her father-confessor were gathered about her, awaiting her last breath.

Suddenly the solemn silence of the death-chamber was broken by a disturbance at one of the doors. There was some subdued talking, followed by a sound as if the servant had been pushed back; the next instant the door opened, and a stranger strode into the room.

The priest held up a warning finger, while a faint cry of remonstrance broke from some of the friends; but the intruder was not to be thwarted, advancing boldly to the very bedside.

Here he paused in some consternation.

The dying woman lay so white, so breathless, and so still that he thought himself too late.

"Is she dead?" he asked, in a low tone, with a foreign accent.

"Not dead—but her soul passes. How dare you intrude here?" asked the father, in tones equally low, but stern.

"That I may have justice done to me and mine! Alas, if I am too late!"

Solemn as was the scene those present could not repress glances of deep curiosity at the audacious stranger—audacious in act, yet not in appearance, for his countenance was as modest as it was pleasing.

He was evidently an Englishman, and a gentleman—young, fine-looking, interesting.

The relatives, who recalled the marriage of one of their family with an English earl, seemed to feel that he might have some right there; while the priest, who had listened to the Countess Cecelia's dying confession, at once comprehended who he was and what was his errand.

He had a right there, but the holy father was none the more pleased to see him on that account.

At this instant they were all startled by a faint exclamation from the dying lady, and, looking toward her, perceived a great change had come over her countenance.

Her eyes were wide open and smiling, a flush had leaped from her poor, labouring heart to her wasted cheek.

She attempted to rise in bed, but sank back on her pillow, holding out both her hands to the stranger.

"Is it you, my Lord Harry?" she asked, in that thrillingly clear voice which sometimes startles us in the dying. "Come to see me die! You have scarcely grown a day older in all these years, which have made an old woman of me. The same kind blue eyes, the same fair hair that I loved so! But, alas! I was a married woman and you chose Valencia. You never dreamed that I loved you so passionately—did you, my lord?"

"Daughter, your mind wanders," interposed the priest. "Collect your thoughts if you can. This is not the man who married your sister-in-law, Valencia—it is his son."

A puzzled expression came into the brilliant eyes—a little of the sudden illumination faded out of the countenance.

"Oh!" she sighed, wearily. "His son?" She lay quiet for a brief interval; then turned her gaze, smiling and pleased, back to the young man's face.

"He is like his father," she said. "I am glad he came. It does me good to see him. Father, will you be sure to give him the papers which I placed in your hands for his father? Child, you will give my love to your father?"

"You can take it to him," answered the young man, very softly. "He went before you, Lady Cecelia. My father is dead."

She clasped her hands and looked upward.

"Oh, lady!" cried Lord Harry, dropping on his knees by her bedside, "before you are past giving in your testimony, tell me, I implore you, is it true that my mother married my father while the Count Steffazzi was alive, and that I and my dear sisters were born without a legal right to our father's name? They say so. Your letters say so. Tell me the truth!"

He seized her thin hand, gazing intently at her struggling lips. She attempted to answer, but the sounds died on her lips; she pointed with the other hand to the priest.

"He knows all," she murmured, brokenly.

In the effort a tremour ran through her frame—she was dead.

"This is no place for me," said Lord Harry, in a whisper to the priest. "I should not have intruded on such a scene had not more than my own welfare

depended on it. I will now go to my hotel. Will you tell me where and when I can see you?"

"To-morrow at eleven, at the Convent of St. Paul. Inquire for Father Chrysostom."

Twenty-four hours seemed an age for Lord Harry to wait, in his present state of doubt, commingled with fear and hope; but he could not press his own personal matters upon the priest at such a time; so he departed, to while away the day as best he could. Leaving the Villa, he wandered on along the entrancingly beautiful road, which gave him glimpses of the bay, ever brighter and broader as he climbed the ascending way.

The exclamations of the dying lady came back upon his memory with more meaning than they had had for him at the moment she uttered them.

"But, alas! I was a married woman, and you chose Valencia!" "The same fair hair that I loved so!"

"She loved my father, then; so, of course, she would not willingly injure him."

This was the conclusion to which he arrived, after thinking over the broken exclamations of the dying woman. His hopes, if he had ever cherished any, grew very faint indeed. And now, with the elasticity of youth, he began 'his very day to build up a new life on the ruins of the old. Looking about him, he thought that it would not be so dreadful a thing to find a modest home in this beautiful region, in which he and his sisters might live a secluded life, surrounded by the loveliest scenes in the world. He even selected the pretty villa which he should like to purchase.

Yet when he thought of himself and sisters dwelling in that fair home a pang shot through him fierce and keen. Dear as his sisters were, they were not all to him! What man would be satisfied wholly with the company of the sweetest sisters who had loved a woman like Agnes and longed for her as his wife? With Agnes, indeed, he could live here a life of felicity. But he was too proud to solicit her love now. He could not go to her as a ruined man and ask her to share his fallen fortunes.

In reveries like this the hours slipped away, until he became aware that the sun was low in the West and that he was tired and hungry. His lawyer, waiting his return from the Villa Rinaldini, must be wondering what had become of him.

He walked rapidly back, down the vine slopes, reaching his hotel in the city just as the sun was setting. Hawkeye was sitting on the piazza looking a little cross for the want of his dinner, which he had delayed in the momentary expectations of Lord Harry's return.

"Well?" he inquired, sententially, as his client came up the steps.

Lord Harry laughed and blushed.

"I am afraid I have nothing to report which will justify my long absence. I have been wandering over the hills."

"Humph! Have you dined, my lord?"

"Indeed, I have not—and am ravenously hungry after my ramble."

They went into the saloon, and chose a small table to themselves. The younger gentleman saw that his companion was somewhat irritated at being kept from his dinner three or four hours—he thought he knew how, however, to restore his good-humour, which he did most effectually by ordering a liberal and epicurean repast. After the first edge had been taken from their appetites they had leisure for conversation.

"She was dying when I forced my way into her chamber."

"Ah!"

"Yes. She could not answer the question which I put to her. But she intimated that the priest by her bedside knew all—indeed, that he had some papers relating to my mother's affairs, and I am promised an interview with him to-morrow."

"Good! I hope we shall stumble upon something. I am tired of working in the dark."

"We have done nothing, Hawkeye, so far—that is true."

"Nothing whatever. I've been worrying about like a hound in the field, to get on the scent. Let me once get on the scent of a fact, and you may trust me to worry it down sooner or later. By the way, the enemy is also here in search of evidence. I saw Simmons to-day."

"Who is Simmons?"

"Captain Bramblethorpe's attorney. I daresay he was not entirely pleased at finding me here in advance of him."

"I suppose not. It's the loss of the letters which has driven him here. We have made them some trouble at least."

"Yes, confound them! we'll make them more!" rejoined the lawyer, energetically. He was not only interested in his young client, but he hated Simmons. To win a case from him would be more of a gratification to him than all the money he should receive for his labours. His eyes gleamed at the thought.



They passed an hour at the table, discussing the one topic of any interest to them. Then Lord Harry said:

"We can do nothing until eleven o'clock to-morrow; we may as well pass away the evening at the opera!" and they went to hear some delicious music, during which Hawkseye fell sound asleep, and his young client dreamed of love and Agnes as his soul melted under the passionate sweetness and pain of the theme.

As they were coming from the opera building in the crowd some one pushed a scrap of paper into Lord Harry's hand. He could not see who did it, as several persons were pushing close to him. The first lamp he came to, after freeing himself from the press, he stopped to examine the paper. On it was written:

"You may as well return to your own country. You will find nothing in Naples to support your claims. I shall be very busy to-morrow and would prefer not to keep the engagement I made with you. The funeral of the Countess Cecelia Rinaldini takes place on the following day. In the meantime I have to go ten miles in the country to visit a departing brother. I shall have left on this mission before eleven in the morning. FATHER CHRYSOSTOM."

He gave the note to his lawyer to read.

"Fiddlesticks!" said Hawkseye. "We will go to the convent gate at sunrise and nab this slippery father as he comes out. I will tell you what has happened to him. Simmons has got wind of him and has bribed him. No doubt he has given him a handsome sum. We must double it. You can beat the captain at that game, my lord, since he must come quickly to the bottom of his purse."

The following morning the two Englishmen were at the convent gate at sunrise, and there they remained, scrutinizing every one who went in and out.

They made a frugal breakfast on figs, grapes and bread, which they bought of a wandering vendor.

About nine o'clock a priest came forth, whom Lord Harry at once recognized as the one he sought.

The twinkling eyes of the smooth-faced father saw instantly who the two men were, but he affected not to see them, walking rapidly away.

Lord Harry laid his hand on the priest's arm.

"Oh, it is you, is it?" asked the father, reluctantly pausing. "You must not detain me at this time, as I am on my way to visit a dying man."

"Dying humbug!" exclaimed Hawkseye, to himself, stepping up. "All we desire to know, reverend sir, is what price you put upon the papers which the Countess Rinaldini confided to you to deliver to his lordship here? Will five hundred pounds satisfy you?"

The priest drew a long face.

"Who told you there were any papers?"

"The countess did not mention papers. She only said that the good father knew and would tell me all," interrupted Lord Harry.

The lawyer gave him a sly glance and then continued:

"I feel certain there are written documents. In a matter of so much importance there must be some. Come, we will give you five hundred pounds for them."

"Even if they are worth nothing?" asked the father, equally sly. "To tell you all, sir, there was a paper given me by the poor, foolish lady now dead. It was but a love-sick rhapsody about the young English lord who married her sister Valencia. I thought the best thing I could do with it would be to burn it; and I did so the same evening that I carried it to the convent. All that I know about your affairs, my young lord, is that I have heard it whispered in the Rinaldini family that when your mother married the English earl the Count Steffazzi was still alive—not shipwrecked, as all at the time supposed."

"Do you believe it?" asked the lawyer, sharply, and his keen eye held the falling one of the priest.

"Yes," was the dogged reply. "I know of money being sent to him in South America to keep him quiet."

"Is he alive now?"

"I do not know. I think not. But I absolutely must be going. As I said last night, my lord, you had best return home. The more you stir the puddle the more offensive you make it," and he broke from Lord Harry's grasp and hurried on his way.

"That good father was uttering falsehoods all the time," said Hawkseye. "I wish I had offered him a thousand pounds!"

"I am not so sanguine as you are," murmured Lord Harry, very much cast down by this interview with Father Chrysostom.

"If you say so I'll go to Brazil, my lord."

"Alas! what is the use?"

"You ought to make a good fight for your sisters' sake."

"I would show you how I would hang on if I believed their story untrue. It is the truth of it which kills me!"

"Pshaw! true or untrue, disprove it if you can! For my part, I am willing to sail for South America to-morrow. Certainly, it will not be impossible to ascertain there whether a Signor Marco Belloni drew such large sums, year after year, from any banking-house in Rio Janeiro, and, if he did, who he was, where he is—alive or dead. Let me once get on the man's track, and I shall discover everything."

"If you are willing to undertake so long and perilous a journey, my dear sir, I ought to be grateful. Go, if you can. I suppose the case will be tried and decided before you can return."

"We are not even so sure as that! Simmons is here, searching after something wanted—conclusive evidence, of course. He may find it necessary to send to Brazil. Courage, my lord! We will look around here a couple of days more, and if we find nothing of importance I will start for South America. Fortunately for your case I am a bachelor, so have no family to keep me. I shall enjoy the trip—it will be a mere pleasure voyage to me."

Lord Harry wrung the lawyer's hand. He felt grateful for so much zeal and solicitude.

"Don't you be too grateful," said the cynical old fellow. "I am grinding my own axe at the same time. This is a big case. It is a high honour to be employed in it. If I show any talent, even in defending you vainly, it will be the making of my reputation. I can afford to be enthusiastic."

The next day Lord Harry attended the funeral of the Countess Rinaldini. The solemn music which filled the vast cathedral, the dim lights, the fitting figures of the priests, the black-robed mourners, affected him strangely. This woman was his mother's sister by marriage. She loved his father! And in her dead heart lay locked the truth he so burned to know. Oh, if he could have spoken with her a day sooner!

Was it not Fate, whose name is also Sorrow, which held him away from her, until her poor, pale lips were too weak to whisper that which it was so important he should hear?

The day after the funeral he sought an interview with several members of the Rinaldini family, all of whom were equally surprised at his strange story, never having heard the lightest rumour of the mysterious existence of Count Steffazzi. They were inclined to regard it as an incredible mistake; and when Lord Harry showed him the letters written by the Countess Valencia to his father they shook their heads, bewildered. There was only one point upon which they were all agreed—that, about the time these letters were dated, the countess had received a sudden accession of wealth, which had enabled her to enlarge the Villa and to resume her old splendour of living. One or two did not hesitate to say that they believed the countess had levied black-mail. This was what Lord Harry had hoped to prove; yet the proofs seemed farther away from him than ever.

Once more he sought out Father Chrysostom; but the priest was curt and uncommunicative, hedging himself behind the fact that he had no right to betray dying confessions. In vain Lord Harry argued that the dying lady had given the priest permission to tell him what he asked to know. He could get nothing out of the father by threats, persuasions, or bribery; and was compelled to retire, defeated, from the endeavour. Hawkseye then sailed for South America, and the young lord returned, despondent, if not utterly hopeless, to England.

Meantime how fared it with the poor young things shut up in Bramblethorpe Villa, with the gloomy November weather, alone, sad, and apparently deserted by their friends? Clara, young, bright and abounding in animal spirits, threw off trouble as a bird throws off the rain from its glossy plumage. Every day she would have a crying spell; but it would not last long, and after the shower she would brighten up at once. She played and sang and drew, and raced over the great house like a little girl—played with her kitten and dog, and rode on her pony when the weather permitted.

But Lady Augusta could not thus lightly ignore their real situation. Quiet and pale, she almost awed her younger sister by the deep gravity of her looks. She, indeed, had a double trial to bear—not only the loss of name and position, but of the man whose wife she almost was. Yes, a few weeks more would have made her the wife of Mr. Douglass. Her wedding garments met her glance every time she looked in a wardrobe or bureau. Everywhere she encountered some sign of the approaching wedding to remind her of her grief and misery. She fled from her own room, and stayed with Clara, to escape from the sight of the preparations she had made.

Her brother had been gone two weeks. It had been three since she began to expect Mr. Douglass, and in that time she had not received even a letter from him.

On this particular afternoon she sat in the great, empty drawing-room, feeling as lonely and deserted as ever girl felt. Clara was off with her dog, having

a race in the grounds; for the lowering weather had at last cleared away, leaving a cool, bright day. "Tears, idle tears" welled up in her eyes, dropping unnoticed down her cheeks. Leaning back in the blue velvet easy-chair, her fair, bright hair and sweet, pale face made a lovely picture against the azure frame, but she was not "posing" for effect. Little she recked how she looked now. There was no one to see or to care whether or not she was pretty.

As the tears dropped faster and faster she shut her eyes as if to keep them back.

A carriage drove up to the gateway, its wheels sounding on the drive; but poor Lady Augusta was so absorbed in her unhappiness that the noise did not catch her attention. Some one was admitted to the hall, and came, without ceremony, into the drawing-room. Mr. Douglass, in his travelling great-coat and gloves, stood there, suddenly very still and silent, gazing at the wan, worn, tear-wet face.

"Poor child!" he murmured, gazing on her in a rapture of love and sorrow—sorrow to see, so plainly, what she was suffering.

The murmur startled her; she unclosed her heavy lids, looking straight at her lover, as if not at all surprised to find him standing there. She had been dreaming of him, and, waking at the sound of his step in the room, knew that she was awake.

"Too cruel! too cruel!" she whispered. "He is breaking my heart, and he does not care even that it is broken."

"Angusta, my darling! are you speaking of me?" he said, reproachfully, advancing, as she started to her feet, now fully awakened.

"Mr. Douglass!"

She seemed to have frozen in that moment.

She had been pale, but now she was white, cold and haughty. He would not be repelled, but advanced and took her in his arms.

"You must not!" she cried, struggling in his grasp. "Release me! All is changed between us!"

"Is our love changed?" he asked, tenderly, trying to look in her eyes.

"Oh, I do not know! I suppose so. Why have you kept away from us in our trouble?"

And now she met his gaze proudly and fully.

"I have been ill—very ill! Too ill to write. Did you then doubt me, Angusta? I thought you knew me too thoroughly."

A sudden splendour broke over her face.

"Forgive me," she murmured. "I did doubt you. You remained absent and silent at the time of our trial. Ah! you have been ill! You are pale and thin. What ailed you, Mr. Douglass?"

"Mr. Douglass!" he mimicked her, smiling. "It was an attack of fever, which went to my brain. I was not feeling well in Scotland. I was afraid that I was threatened with something of the kind, but hoped to feel better when I got with you, my sweet. On reaching London I got very wet in a drenching storm, to which, by accident, I was exposed; that, with the worry and excitement of hearing of your great trouble, brought me down. I went to bed with a severe headache, and after that, for some days, time was a blank. My servant was a faithful fellow, knew my doctor in London, and the two did everything necessary for me. I recovered with astonishing rapidity, as you may guess to see me here. It was with difficulty I coaxed the doctor to let me out to-day, and, indeed, I do tremble a little on my legs, I believe."

"And I have kept you standing all this time," she said, pushing him gently into a chair. "Ah, how ill you look! I will ring the bell and have something hot brought to you as soon as it can be made. Tea or coffee—which?"

"A cup of coffee will restore me. Meantime I will lie on the sofa, with your permission. I did not realize that I had so little strength. Sit close by me, darling, and let me hold your hand."

How could she refuse him? Her whole soul went out in yearning love to him, as he lay there, so languid and pale, gazing at her so fondly, proving his love by the exhaustive effort he had made to get to her.

Yet she had vowed to herself that she would never marry Mr. Douglass, and, before his absence had aroused her scorn, she had said to herself that she would release him from his obligations, that, let him plead as he might, she would not go to him a portionless and nameless bride—no, not though he should suffer nearly as much as herself. Never, never!

This resolve was not shaken as she sat there, allowing him to hold her hand, her whole frame kindling and thrilling at his touch. The more she admired, respected, worshipped him the less would she permit him to enter into an alliance not consonant with what he had a right to expect and could command. He had wooed her as the Lady Augusta—he should not wed her as a nameless and portionless girl.

"Never!"

She repeated it to her own heart as she watched

him lying there so feebly, and answered his smile with one almost as cheerful. But this was no time to tell him so. Exhausted by the effort to reach her, he could bear no more excitement at present. To-day she would nurse and tend him—she would not too much repel him. To-morrow she would make known to him her resolution.

(To be continued.)

## LADY CHETWYND'S SPECTRE.

### CHAPTER XXI.

IN the picturesque bay of Genoa a trim little steamer lay, her engine puffing noisily, sailors rushing to and fro on her white deck, screaming and hallooing in mixed jargon, in all the hurry and confusion of intending immediate departure.

At one end of the vessel were grouped the few passengers, some of them Italian, some French, one an Englishman.

The Englishman was the young Marquis of Chetwynd.

He stood apart from his fellow voyagers, leaning lightly upon the taffrail, and regarding the scenery as if he meant to photograph it upon his memory.

He was on his way home to England.

He had travelled far during his fifteen months of self-imposed exile; had wandered under Indian suns; had explored the tombs and temples of Egypt; had spent weeks amid the ruins of Thebes, Luxor, Karnac and Baalbec; had followed the Blue Nile into Abyssinia; and now, tired of his wanderings, and yearning to see once more the green fields and shaded park of his own domain, was hurrying homeward, beset by the same restlessness that had characterized him since the hour he had consigned his young wife to the tomb.

In the shadow of the long and cool arcades which separate the harbour from the tall houses of the Via Carlo Alberto and the Piazza di Scaramento, a tall Englishman was approaching the water-side with swift and hasty strides. He threaded his way among lounging Turks, Armenians, Syrians, and strangely costumed men of Eastern nations, among the barded vendors of *fredda acqua* and lemonade, past women whose only head-gear were white muslin or black lace veils, pursued by red-capped boatmen anxious to row him to his vessel, but he seemed oblivious of them all. He came down upon the quay, summoned a boatman with an imperative gesture, and was rowed out to the waiting steamer. He climbed lightly aboard, tossing a couple of coins to his rower, and as he strode along the deck, and stood near the marquis, the vessel moved slowly out upon the sunlit waters of the bay.

He was a tall, grandly formed man of some forty years, with hair and eyes of dead blackness. His beard was long and thick and also coal-black. He was of noble and distinguished presence, of commanding air, of reserved and haughty demeanour, and possessed of a pair of eagle eyes, a scornful mouth, and an expression of disdain and cynicism.

The two were silent for a few moments, watching the receding shores, and Chetwynd then addressed the stranger, making some allusion to the romantic character of the scenery.

"You are English, then?" said the new comer, abruptly, replying, as Chetwynd had spoken, in the English tongue. "I thought so. That fair hair of yours and that yellow moustache betray your nationality. Although at the first glance I took you for a German. I have not spoken to an Englishman for years. I generally avoid my countrymen abroad," and his lips curled in a cynical smile. "I am not an admirer of the ordinary travelling Briton, who leaves stacks of ale bottles at the foot of the Pyramids, and who would, if he were not watched, write his name in lead-pencil on the walls of the Holy Sepulchre at Jerusalem. It is true, however, that I have not been troubled with the sight of many Englishmen during the last ten or fifteen years. I chose this line of steamers because I believed that I should not meet many of my countrymen upon it. It seems that I was right, and that you and I are the only representatives of Britannia on board."

Lord Chetwynd made an assenting response. His interest in his compatriot began to deepen, but he did not betray the fact by word or glance, continuing to contemplate the superb city they were leaving.

"You are unlike most Englishmen who rush abroad to do Italy or the Continent in the shortest possible time," observed the stranger, after a pause. "Perhaps it is the novelty of again meeting one of my countrymen—perhaps it is that I am, after all, not a desperate hater of my kind—but, whatever the reason, I am interested in you. As we are to be fellow-voyagers, suppose we exchange addresses?"

"Willingly. I am the Marquis of Chetwynd; and you?"

"I am Basil Tempest. I am returning to England

after an absence of many years spent in China, and Tartary."

"You are Tempest the explorer?" said Chetwynd. "I have been familiar with your name for many years, sir. Who in England has not heard of Tempest, the explorer of Tartary and China? I have read your books, and studied your course through wilds where no Englishman has penetrated before you. You have done more than any other man to open to the eyes of the world the interior of China and Tartary. I admire your courage, your energy, your devotion to science. I am happy to make the acquaintance of the distinguished traveller Tempest."

They talked awhile of their mutual travels, making rapid acquaintance, and Tempest then went below to see that his luggage had been sent below and properly stored before his arrival on board ship.

The two did not meet again until the evening.

The night came on dark, with a fierce wind and a rough sea. The deck was wet and deserted. Chetwynd went up on deck at a late hour, and stood leaning against the side of the vessel, watching the phosphorescent gleam of the furious waters. The cordage creaked; the engine laboured heavily; the vessel rolled and tossed uneasily, now in the trough of the waves, now upon the crest of a billow, seemingly making little progress.

"It's a wild night," said the voice of Mr. Tempest, at Chetwynd's elbow. "I like to witness this warping of the elements, to see those giant white waves rush upon us like furious white chargers attempting to ride us down. I like storms and conflicts of power, such as this, when sea and wind are fighting."

"I have had so much of unrest in my own life of late," said the marquis, sighing, "that all I long for is peace."

"Have you too known sorrow?" asked Mr. Tempest.

"Who has not?" was Lord Chetwynd's bitter response. "It is only fifteen months since I lost my wife. I cannot speak of it—but all the world has changed to me since then. I abandoned my home and my country in the first bitterness of my despair, and have wandered since without aim. But lately a yearning has come upon me, after spending months in treeless, barren solitudes, to see my own home again—the room in which she died, the room where she used to sit, to play on her piano, to sew her embroidery. I feel too that rest and peace can come to me only through the consciousness of duties fulfilled. And so I am on my way home to care for my tenants, to see to my model school, and to find peace in work."

"Did your wife die?" asked the explorer, in a strangely moved voice.

"Yes, she died. Did you not hear me say that I lost her?"

"Yes, but wives are sometimes lost to us when they do not die," said Mr. Tempest, with an odd thrill in his deep, musical voice. "You ought to know peace, Lord Chetwynd, if she is dead—if she died loving you. Why are you not happy? She is safe, and your heart must thrill at the memory of her loving words, of her tenderness, of her love. I had a wife once, and I lost her. But she did not die. It was her loss that made me what I am, Tempest the explorer. If I had not lost her I should have been the happiest man in England to-day, the rejoicing father of a family, a proud husband, a simple, contented soul whose highest ambition would have been to become a member of Parliament, and whose farthest travels would not have extended beyond Rome. But—I lost her."

There was a few minutes' silence between the two, during which the labouring of the engine became more plainly marked and perceptible.

"You must not misunderstand me," said Mr. Tempest, at last, in a voice that sounded broken. "My wife did not abandon me. I adored her. She was well born but poor. She was a beautiful young girl when I first saw her, and she had already several suitors. I loved her and her father approved my suit. I was rich, you see, and he spoke bitterly; so her father favoured my suit. She had another devoted lover, handsomer than I, but she seemed to look coldly upon him. I courted her, and married her. She received my caresses coldly; she never spoke a word to me; she was an iceberg. Idiot that I was, I believed she acted out her nature. And I lavished upon her all the hoarded tenderness of my heart, and believed that she loved me in a feeble way in return. But one evening—we had been married some three years then—I returned home unexpectedly. I entered the house with my latch-key. I heard voices in the drawing-room, and went thither. I must have opened the door softly, for no one heard me. I stood on the threshold and saw my wife in her favourite chair, with a man kneeling at her feet. He was the handsome lover she had discarded for me. He had just returned from a long absence abroad,

He was telling her how he loved her and had always loved her."

Mr. Tempest paused, his voice choked.

"But that proves nothing against your wife, Mr. Tempest," said the young marquis. "She might not have encouraged his declaration. She might have loved you."

Mr. Tempest laughed sneeringly.

"You have not heard all," he said, bitterly. "I listened for her answer, with my heart in my throat. And what was her answer? She broke out into a passionate fit of weeping, and forbade him to speak to her in that manner. And to enforce the command she dropped her head to his shoulder and confessed that she loved him—she, my wife!—that she had always loved him; but that he was poor, and she could not mate with poverty; that her father had compelled her to marry me, but that she abhorred me! She told him all this and more—that she loathed the sight of me; that my caresses tortured her; that she wished she was dead and in her grave, that she might be free from me! Then she raised her head and retreated from him, wringing her hands wildly and begging him to leave her."

"I heard it all. I felt like a tiger in that moment. I could have leaped in upon them and torn to pieces the fair, false creature I had so adored. But I restrained myself. I shut the door softly and went upstairs. For some moments all was a blank to me. I suppose I raged like a madman. I felt outraged, deceived, cajoled, heart-broken. Of course all was over for ever between me and the woman who married me for my money and position, and who hated me. I would not longer torture her by my presence. I resolved that she should be free from me in this world. I sat down at her desk and wrote her a letter, telling her that I had heard all, and that she was free. I think I told her I should kill myself, and that she could marry her lover."

"I do not remember distinctly all the events of that hour. I left the house before her lover quitted her. I have never seen my wife since. I suppose that she believes me dead, and is married to him. I shall never let her know that I am living. I did mean to take my own life when I wrote that letter, but I was not cowardly enough."

"Perhaps she is dead?"

"Perhaps. I am going back to England to see her grave if she is dead, to catch a glimpse of her face if she is living. I shall not reveal myself to her, and I am not returning to see her, Chetwynd, but to fulfil a sacred duty which I have too long neglected. I have long been haunted by the fear that I might die and leave that duty unfulfilled; and though I have neglected it so long I cannot die in peace unless it is fulfilled. It is that duty which brings me to England."

"Do you love your wife still, Mr. Tempest? Pardon the question."

"No. When my respect for her died my love died also. Full of deceit, weak enough to confess to her old lover that she abhorred her husband, how could I love a woman like that? You see it is better to lose one's wife by death, my lord. I do not know what impulse has led me to tell you my story; perhaps the fact that you have suffered; perhaps the hope to lessen your regrets for your own loss. I never told my story before, but there are moments of weakness known to every soul when one longs to unburden all one's sorrow, and to hear a comforting word. Such a mood is upon me to-night. I shall repent it to-morrow. So forget what I have said, and let it be as if it had not been."

Lord Chetwynd sought the explorer's hand and grasped it warmly.

"Your sorrow is worse than mine," he said. "Let us be friends. You stand alone in the world; let me be something more to you than a stranger. I never met a man I was so drawn to at first sight. Shall we be friends?"

"As you will, although a worn and weary man like me is no fit friend for you. You are young, my lord, and in time you will learn to bear your sorrow with resignation. Your trust in mankind is not broken up; your happiness has not been laid waste by the hand of deceit. You may even marry again, and know a measure of the happiness you lost. You are young to give up to consuming and eternal despair."

The two men talked throughout the whole of that dark and dreary night. Near daybreak Mr. Tempest went below. When he appeared at breakfast he was again the cool, cynical man of the previous day. He was friendly therefore with Lord Chetwynd, but he was not again confidential. The book of his past was sealed again, and he had no intention of reopening it. But the pair were friends thenceforth and for ever. The very fact that Tempest had laid bare his soul in an unwonted moment of weakness, as he termed it, was to be a bond between them always.

The weather cleared during the day, and in due



time the trim little steamer laboured into the port of Marseilles. Lord Chetwynd and Mr. Tempest went to the same hotel. They journeyed to England together, and stopped at the same quiet family hotel in Piccadilly, London, arriving there late at night.

On the following morning Mr. Monk and Mr. Sanders, having previously received a telegram from his lordship, made their appearance at the hotel, and soon after their arrival his lordship took his leave of his new friend Mr. Tempest, and started for Chetwynd Park.

After the departure of the marquis Mr. Tempest commenced perusing the morning journals.

Suddenly he uttered a great, appalling cry that rang through the room, and the newspaper dropped from his hand.

"What! Dead!" he whispered. "Dead!"

He caught up the paper again and read the paragraph with protruding eyes, and corpse-like visage. The paragraph that so frightened him was as follows:

"**TERRIBLE DISASTER AT SEA.**—We learn that the fishing schooner 'Wave Rider,' owned in Glasgow by the Messrs. Dunallen, was lost at sea with her entire crew on the 10th ult. She went on a fishing cruise in company with the 'Ailsie,' also owned by the same firm, and the two vessels, encountering a storm when beyond their usual fishing-grounds, were driven hundreds of miles from their course. The 'Ailsie' was badly damaged, and under continued stress of weather they put into the harbour of the little island of St. Kilda, making here the necessary repairs. On the 9th ult. the two vessels started in company for Glasgow, bringing with them in the 'Wave Rider' as passengers the Rev. David Gwellan and wife, of St. Kilda. On the 10th ult. the two vessels encountered the terrible cyclone which spread such wide disaster on the Atlantic, and whose frightful recitals have been chronicled day after day in these columns. The 'Wave Rider' was dismasted at the first outset of the gale, and tossed to and fro at the mercy of the sea. She was hurled on her beam ends and capsized, going down with all on board. The 'Ailsie' was also disabled, and unable to go to her consort's relief.

"The captain of the 'Wave Rider' leaves a wife and large family. The crew of eleven men also left families. The vessel was fully insured.

"The Rev. David Gwellan has been for many years minister of St. Kilda. His health has been very much broken for a year past, and he was returning to Scotland to consult an able physician when he met his untimely fate. Mrs. Gwellan was a Scotch lady by birth. We understand that the unfortunate couple leave no children, their adopted daughter, Miss Bernice Gwellan, having died over a year since. But they will not die unmourned. The humblest islanders of St. Kilda will mourn the noble, self-sacrificing minister and his wife as children mourn a parent. 'The good they did shall live after them.'"

Mr. Tempest stared at the concluding sentences in a rigid horror.

"Dead!" he said, hollowly. "Bernice is dead! The Gwellans are dead also. I have waited too long. I have left my sacred duty undone, and now it is too late! Bernice has been dead a year! I shall never see her to implore her forgiveness for leaving her all her young life on that dreary island. I shall never feel her kisses on my cheek, never hear her call me father. In all my imaginings I never dreamed of this. Oh, Bernice, my poor, wronged child, outcast from her father's heart because of her mother's falsehood and deceit, shall I never see your innocent face again? Now I know that, unsuspected and unknown to me, I looked forward to a reunion with my child. My child! Oh, Heaven, I am childless! I am alone! I have no voyage to make now. One look in my false wife's face, myself unseen, and I shall go back to Tartary."

He bowed his grand head and wept aloud.

#### CHAPTER XIII.

The young lord drove home from Eastbourne in an open carriage with Mr. Sanders and Gilbert Monk, in the dull gloom of a lowering March afternoon, under the frowning sky, which seemed continually on the point of dropping rain upon them. His lordship's heart was heavy. It was impossible that he should not be reminded of that other home-coming when he had brought his young bride with him.

The carriage turned in at the lodge gates, and the marquis aroused himself to speak to the lodge-keeper. He was silent as they passed up the avenue.

They drove into the carriage porch, and Chetwynd alighted and went up the steps with a pale face and still silent mien. There was no marshalling of the servants in the great hall. The butler and the housekeeper stood inside the door to give their master welcome, and at a little distance, in the shadow of the grand staircase, like some bird of ill omen,

stood old Ragee, the Indian nurse of Sylvia Monk, her withered black face looking weird and witch-like under her heavy red turban.

The marquis shook hands with his faithful servants, bowed to the old Indian woman with his never-failing courtesy, and allowed the butler to pull off his greatcoat. Ridding himself of gloves, cap and muffler, his lordship passed into the drawing-room, Monk and Sanders lingering in the hall.

The drawing-room was very inviting after the chill gloom without. There were three glowing fires, one in each polished grate. The amber satin curtains were drawn back from the wide recessed windows. An easy-chair was drawn up before one hearth, and a sofa before another. The vases upon the white marble mantel-piece were crowded with hot-house flowers, whose long tendrils trailed against the wall.

Among the various pictures adorning the room was a fine portrait in oils of the young marquis, painted two years before. This portrait was exquisitely wreathed with flowers, and under it, upon a small bracket draped with amber velvet under point lace, was a lovely bouquet of odorous blossoms.

A sudden moisture dimmed Chetwynd's eyes at this evidence of regard for him. Only one person in the house was capable of so delicate a tribute of welcome. He looked around for her. The long, luxurious room had no occupant besides himself. He called quickly, half impatiently:

"Sylvia!"

There was a fluttering sound in the inner drawing-room, and Sylvia Monk, tall and regularly handsome in her swarthy East Indian beauty, dressed in a sort of half-mourning, wearing a sweeping robe of purple velvet and ornaments of gleaming purple amethysts, with a red gleam in the dull blackness of her now open eyes, red roses on her dusky olive cheeks, and a smile of rapture on her red lips, came softly, swiftly, with sinuous rush, to meet him.

He held out his hands to her, but she put up her face to be kissed.

"Oh, Roy, dear Roy!" she breathed, in a rapturous voice, resting her head upon his shoulder. "Welcome home—a thousand times welcome!"

She drew back from him upon the instant, as in maidenly modesty, and he noted the red flush that mounted to her face, her eagerness and excitement, and in her drooping eyes he read the fact that she loved him.

He withdrew towards the fire with a feeling almost of repulsion. He had no wish for love other than a calm, sisterly affection.

Miss Monk took the alarm, and swept after him to the marble hearth, and laid her hand upon his arm, and said, in a tone of tender pleading:

"Dear Roy, if you only knew how eagerly I have looked forward to this hour! I have thought of you by day and by night. I have wondered where you were, and wept and prayed for your return. And now you have come, and I find you changed—cold—constrained."

Her voice gave way in seeming sobs. She drooped her head.

"Not changed to you, Sylvia," said Chetwynd, affectionately, taking her in his arms, "my dear sister, of whom I have often thought in my wanderings. I am not the man I was two years ago. My sorrow has changed me, but I am the same Roy to you."

He kissed her, and at the same moment Gilbert Monk and Sanders entered the room. Sylvia slipped away from his lordship, flushed and satisfied, and Monk and the bailiff exchanged significant glances.

Sanders remained to dinner, and retired with the marquis to the library soon after, having requested a few minutes' private interview with his lordship.

"I don't care to discuss business this evening, Sanders," said the young lord, as the two entered the dim Moorish library. "We will look over the accounts any day you like, but not to-night."

Chetwynd returned to the drawing-room. Monk and Sylvia were there, the former pacing the room usually, the latter seated before the hearth with a dainty bit of wool embroidery. Sylvia looked up brightly as his lordship entered, and dropped her work upon her lap.

The marquis approached her and took a seat near her.

Sylvia, smiling sweetly upon him, bent herself to the task of winning him. She meant to renew her betrothal if possible before she slept.

Gilbert Monk continued to walk to and fro. He was equally anxious with Sylvia for her marriage to Chetwynd. Until that marriage should come off his game in regard to Bernice was blocked.

He was thinking thus when the hall porter opened the door and approached him, saying:

"Mr. Monk, there's a low fellow in the hall who says he must see you. I sent him away, but he

won't go. He says he's no beggar, but a former servant of yours—"

"Send him off," said Monk, impatiently. "I never kept a servant."

"Yes," said the porter; "but he gave me a 'arf-crown to tell you his name, which he says it's Flack."

Monk started.

"Flack?" he ejaculated. "Why, he was a servant of mine. I'll see him."

He hurried out into the hall. Flack stood just inside the great portal, his hat in his hand, his villainous, hang-dog face wearing a vacant expression, his small eyes roving about the hall. Monk went up to him and asked, in an undertone:

"What's up? Why are you here?"

"Come out on the terrace, gov'nor," responded Flack. "I've got something particular to say."

"If you want money," said Monk, in a tone intended for the ears of the hall porter, "I've got none for you. I'm willing to hear the story of your distresses, but I've no money to waste. Why don't you go to the union?"

By this time the pair were out on the terrace, and Monk exclaimed, in a changed voice:

"No one can hear us here. Now what is it?"

"Mrs. Crowl she sent me," said Flack. "Miss Gwyn left Mawr Castle the day before yesterday, and we haven't seen her since."

"Left the castle?"

"Yes, sir, along of a porkmante, which she carried in her hand, and awearing of a gray dress and veil. Mrs. Crowl she thinks Miss Gwyn came this way, sir. It's all along of a newspaper which came around a packet of wools which the French governess bought at Carnarvon. The newspaper had a parrygraph that Lord Chetwynd was at Genoa, and on his way home. That unsettled miss, and she made off the same night. Have you seen her here?"

"No. She's here, or in the neighborhood," cried Monk, in a panic. "You must watch for her, Flack. No violence, remember. She must go back to Mawr Castle, but of her own accord. Go over to the village inn and look for her there. She may be in this house. There are scores of unoccupied rooms, and she may be hiding in them. Be in the edge of the park on the east side of the house after the lights are out. I must see you then—consult with you. I cannot stay here longer without exciting suspicion. We must find the girl to-night."

He returned to the house, concealing his anxiety and perturbation as best he could. He passed the drawing-room, going through the music room to the great conservatory, into which the drawing-rooms, music rooms, and the pink boudoir opened. He sat down in a dim nook among the flowers, his heart beating fiercely, and muttered:

"Bernice here! Bernice back at Chetwynd Park! She will respect her oath. She will not reveal her identity nor presence to her husband; but why does she come? I fear there's mischief ahead."

(To be continued.)

DEAN RAMSAY calculated that four millions of sermons were delivered in England every year. A great deal of seed to plant for a small crop.

A PALACE ON WHEELS.—An elegant "palace car," says the Baltimore Sun, has just been completed at the Mount Clare works of the Baltimore and Ohio Railroad Company, designed as a coach of state for the use of the president and directors of the road. The establishment is one of the most elegant jobs ever turned out in Baltimore, reflecting great credit upon the skill and workmanship of our artisans. The car is to bear the name of "Maryland." It is painted a beautiful buff colour, is mounted upon improved six wheel trucks, and is provided with patent bumpers, patent air-brakes, and other inventions calculated to make travelling less tedious and more safe than ever. The interior is divided into four apartments—the first a sitting-room, in black walnut and birds-eye maple, gilded, with green and crimson upholstery, a rich velvet carpet, luxurious furniture, lounges, and armchairs, and other suitable articles. The second compartment is fitted up for a bedroom, containing a handsome low bedstead of oiled maple, richly carved, hung with heavy damask curtains, a lounge covered with salmon-coloured silk, figured, a dressing-case of exquisite workmanship. Adjoining the chamber is a bath-room, and beyond is the dining-room, arranged to accommodate, if desired, ten or twelve diners. The tables and chairs are stationary, finished in black walnut. The kitchen, one of the most important features in any establishment, occupies the rear end of the car, and is complete in its arrangements for cooking, with range and water-tanks, utensils, etc. The car throughout is of maple and walnut finish, gilded and carved, with plate glass and splendid argand lamps, the whole costing, it is estimated, upwards of \$375,000—a model and a marvel of splendour and elegance of workmanship.



[LILY'S CONFIDANTE.]

## THE GRAY SPECTRE.

It was a large Gothic cottage, situated on the banks of an inland river. Nature had endowed the spot with beauty, and art was only invoked to finish it with elegance. Three tiers of green grass descended, like a flight of emerald steps, from the low French windows to the oval garden plats in front. Tiny statuettes peeped out from arches of roses, and angels of marble, in flying posture, were scattered here and there among the luxuriant flowers. In the centre of each plat was a fountain, in the form of a mermaid, from which infinitesimal streams of water were sent quivering into the air, and, sparkling for an instant under the sunlight, fell into the basin with a silvery splash.

Ah! it was a home fit for a princess, and such was there, in all but title. Lily Lonsdale, the brightest, happiest, dearest little woman that ever lived, reigned supreme within those walls. Perhaps her brown eyes shone sternly sometimes, and perhaps her red lips were not always formed in a smile; if they had been, the contrast with ours would have been so great that we should have felt inferior and uncomfortable. So, you see, it is well that no one is perfect.

"Pearl! Pearl! Oh, you naughty thing!" A wild, carolling laugh followed these words, and then Lily came running upon the lawn, closely followed by a lithe, beautiful greyhound. Sinking upon one of the steps, the maiden pushed the shining masses of brown hair from her shoulders and drew a long breath.

"We've had a splendid run, haven't we, Pearl?" she said, with another careless laugh.

The animal placed his fore-paws in her lap, and stretching out his long, velvety head, gave his mistress a canine kiss.

"Oh, you tease, let me alone! Get down, I say!" The dog obeyed, and crouched at her feet. Just then a step sounded upon the gravel path, and the animal, half raising himself, growled menacingly.

"Oh, you silly thing, be still. I wonder who's coming."

"I, Lily."

A tall, handsome young man leaned over the gate and gazed upon her flushed cheeks and sparkling eyes with admiration. The girl grew serious, and said, demurely:

"How do you do, Cousin Will?"

"Cousin Will?" he repeated, biting the ends of his long moustache. "Why do you always call me that, Lily?"

"Have you any choice of names?" asked she, saucily.

A slight frown clouded his brow, and he turned partially away.

She laughed provokingly, and began caressing the dog again. Minutes passed and William Ashbrook still held his preoccupied attitude. He would not gratify her by letting her know how much she had pained him. When at last he looked round she and Pearl were gone, but he knew where to seek them, and started for the river. When he reached its banks he beheld the little blue and gold skiff dancing on the waters, and Lily's own hands wielding the oars, while Pearl contentedly crouched in the bows. It was a beautiful picture, framed in amber sunlight. The young man sighed, and unconsciously the words left his lips:

"Oh, Lily, if you but dreamed how I love you, you would, could not, be so cold to me, unless indeed your heart is another's!"

The thought was painful, and he shut his teeth together to repress the fierce, jealous words that came to his lips. Then he ran along the bank until he was even with the boat.

"Come ashore, you little sprite. Let me row for you," he exclaimed, cheerfully, his dark reflection having passed.

"Pearl will bite you," she answered, laughing.

"Be serious, Lily. I would speak with you. Will you deny me?"

"Oh, you great plague! Now, get in, if you want

to," and she guided the frail craft toward the bank.

He stepped in, and after some argument she resigned the oars to him and took a seat in the stern. He now became strangely silent, and the only sound that greeted their ears was the musical ripple of the silvery waters as the boat bounded on.

"Lily," he said, at length, in a low, earnest tone. "Cousin Will," she replied, imperturbably.

"I wish you would relinquish that expression," he said, somewhat testily. "It is true that my great-grandmother's sister's son's daughter is your mother, but it leaves little relation between you and me. If it is a pleasure to you to imagine any, why just call me your dear great-grandmother's sister's son's daughter's third cousin."

A slight smile played over his face as he concluded.

Lily looked at the earth and sky, and twirled her hat with cool indifference.

"Lily, I love you—not as a cousin, but as one I would marry. You must have known it—you must have felt it."

He drew in his oars, and allowed the boat to float at will, while his eyes sought her face imploringly. She seemed startled and confused at first, but presently the blushes faded away, and she said, with a certain indescribable naivete:

"Love me? Marry me? You must be crazy, Cousin Will."

"Ah! then I'm not worthy of your love perhaps. Crazy! Thank you!"

"I didn't mean to hurt your feelings."

"And yet you are at it continually."

"Then I should make you a very poor wife. We'd better go ashore."

"Forgive me, Lily. Say, darling, that you love me. This must not end this way. I shall never forgive myself nor you."

"I don't ask your forgiveness, sir."

"Ah!"

He pulled furiously at his oars, and the boat flew towards the bank. He glanced imploringly upon his companion as he helped her out, but there was no answering look in her eyes. In silence they walked towards the house, and without a word or a glance she entered and left him standing on the lawn.

So this was to be the end of all his hopes. Well, it was partly his fault. His pride had caused him to repeat her words, instead of pressing his proposal. Would she have said yes? Oh, bah! what difference could it make now? His life was spoiled, and, no matter how, he must bear it. And, feeling as miserable as a man can be, conveniently, he left the grounds.

Lily was in the drawing-room, sitting at the piano, at eight o'clock that evening, when Mr. Stockton, a London banker, called. It was a relief to see anybody, for she was not so happy as usual, and she wished to be amused.

Horatio Stockton was a great man, in his own estimation, and his words and gestures were fashioned after the manner of great men. His smiles always measured just so much, his tones never rose above such a point.

They were standing by the window now, he and Lily, gazing out upon the beautiful moonlight.

"How should you like to live in London, my dear Miss Lonsdale?" he asked, in his bland way.

"I have heard that it is a very grand place," was the maiden's evasive reply.

"Yes, my dear Miss Lonsdale, it is. And, pardon me, it needs only one thing more to make it dearer than ever to me—yourself. Be not alarmed, I beg of you. I love you as men of my experience only can love. Will you leave this charming spot and become the star of my home?"

Lily, surprised, flattered and excited, knew not what to do or say.

"Pray listen to me. I am wealthy; all your home luxuries you shall have, and more too. I am not a young man, to become giddy, Lily. I have passed all that. Will you be mine?"

"Yes," she said, impulsively, rashly.

At that moment there was a rustling in the bushes near the window, and Lily saw a pale, agonized face gleam upon her with reproach. She started and caught her breath. Mr. Stockton sprang to her aid, but she waved him away and sank into a chair. Presently she recovered, and they conversed on their prospects, he calling her his "dearly beloved," and "beautiful pet," but she felt little interest in him or his words.

At ten o'clock he left the house, and she went to her room, to revel in remorse and to weep bitter tears. Whom had she revenged? Alas—herself! Leave her beautiful home, her parents, and Will, to go to London with one she loved not! A darker picture could hardly have been suggested to her mind.

In the meantime the banker had met with a very strange adventure. Lily had bade him good-night at the head of the long staircase. Every one else in the house had retired, and a hush pervaded the



very air. Slowly Mr. Stockton descended the stairs, thinking intently upon his success. As he reached the landing he looked up, and a succession of chills passed over his frame. Before him stood a tall figure, robed in filmy gray, her white face and bright blue eyes bent upon him accusingly. He strove to collect his courage, but it oozed out in drops of cold perspiration, and he reeled against the baluster, clutching it wildly with both hands.

"Go!"

The apparition raised one long, white arm and pointed toward the door.

Glad to escape so easily, he staggered towards the door and, hastily opened it, dashed into the street. Half an hour later he was in his hotel. Having quieted himself with a large glass of brandy, he lighted a cigar and lay back in his chair.

"That face looked remarkably like Alicia's," he mused. "And yet it cannot be possible. This eight years since I saw her—she can have no idea where I am. But what was it? Ugh! I don't like these things. I must marry that little jewel as quickly as possible. Ha! what's that?"

He started in affright as a faint knock sounded upon the door, and he hesitated whether to open it. Again came a rap louder than the first, and the man tremblingly arose. If she should be alive! But no—the idea was absurd. A succession of knocks now echoed on the panel, and lest the whole corridor should be aroused he quickly opened the door. A gray figure swept past him and glided to a remote corner of the room.

"Who are you? What do you want?" he excitedly whispered.

"Silence! Shut that door!" was the imperious reply.

He obeyed, and advanced to the centre of the room. 'Twas the apparition that he had seen at the Lonsdale mansion. The figure advanced and threw off the gauzy robe, exposing a finely formed woman of middle age attired in drab.

"Alicia!" he gasped, turning deadly pale.

"Ay, villain, your deserted wife! The woman you abused and maltreated. Oh, perjurer, do you ever think of your vows at the altar?"

"I supposed you dead," he faltered, pressing his hands against his shaking knees.

"'Tis false. You thought to escape, but earth could not have hidden you from me. Oh, how my nature revolts against itself when I think that I ever loved you, you cringing apology for man. Sit down and write. Obey quickly. Tell that young and trusting girl what you are and in what relation I stand to you. You shall ruin no more homes."

He complied, but with rage and mortification. The note written, the woman took it, not daring to trust him to deliver it. Then she told him calmly that he should support her in a style commensurate with his wealth, but that she should only be his wife in public, and in private his master. Thus ended Mr. Horatio Stockton's dream of a new wife.

Poor Lily! She awoke the next morning with a shudder as she thought of the fate she had forced upon herself. But relief came during the forenoon, and as she read Mr. Stockton's note a horror settled upon her heart, and then she felt a disgust with herself that was almost unendurable. If Will would only come, it seemed as if her burden would be made lighter. But the day, month and year passed, and no one heard aught of William Ashbrook. At first, Lily grieved all the day long, and Pearl was not thought of; but time, with its healing hand, smoothed the first keen anguish down to an occasional sadness. But Lily would not marry, though she had many excellent offers.

'Twas summer again, and Lily and Pearl were down by the river side, the girl sitting on a camp-stool, and the hound stretched out at her feet. Gradually old memories rushed in upon her mind, and tears came into her eyes. As if in sympathy, the intelligent dog arose and lapped his mistress's white hands.

"Pretty Pearl," she said, stroking his soft fur. "Poor Pearl, wouldn't you like to know where Willie is?"

He howled plaintively, and rubbed his head against her knee.

"I was cross to Willie, wasn't I, Pearl?" she continued, the tears still falling. "I drove him away with my cold words, and perhaps he'll never come back, Pearl; and if he don't, why, I shall die—I know I shall!"

And she pressed her hands to her face and wept passionately.

At that instant a pair of strong arms lifted her up bodily, and warm kisses fell upon her cheeks, lips and brow, while the earnest words saluted her ear:

"My sweet! my beautiful! my own!"

Removing herself from his embrace, she dropped her eyes and ran away blushing.

"Don't you love me, Lily?" he urged, chasing her, and again throwing his arms around her.

She looked up shyly, half smiling through her tears, and nodded.

"And you loved me a year ago to-day, didn't you, darling?"

Another nod, and a quiver of the red lips.

"And you'll always love me, and we'll be very happy, won't we, little Lily?"

"Yes, dear Willie," and she nestled her head upon his shoulder, and looked upon him with devotion in her brown eyes.

One month later they were married, and time has proved the depth of their affection. William knows nothing of the termination of Mr. Stockton's wooing, Lily feeling ashamed of herself whenever a thought of the incident crosses her mind.

G. W. S.

## THE YOUNG LOCKSMITH.

### CHAPTER XVI.

As soon as the excited state of Blount's feelings could be allayed explanations were entered into by all the gentlemen present.

Mr. Holland and young Corson were formally introduced to each other, and the attorney at once entered into details as to what he had learned, what he knew of old Corson's family and other particulars of interest in connection with the discovery he had made, etc., repeating what the reader has already been apprized of in the previous chapter. Then he heartily congratulated the fortunate "heir-at-law" of his father's estate.

"And you resemble your father very remarkably, young man," he said. "I knew him well, as also your mother. You have her eyes, but otherwise your features, build, size, hair, are very like those of Edward Corson, of Strathavon, as I clearly remember him at two-and-twenty years of age."

This interview at Blount's was prolonged to a late hour.

Ned was vastly interested in the stranger's recital, and asked a thousand questions about his probable parents that Holland cheerfully answered to the best of his ability.

The longer he conversed with Ned Corson the more he felt strengthened in his belief that he had fortunately alighted upon the true heir of his old friend, and in the midst of their busy talk of the past and Ned's present fine prospects the patent safe-lock affair had been entirely ignored and lost sight of for the time.

Suddenly old Blount changed the topic by asking, in his jocular way:

"How about the lock trade now, my boy?"

"Oh, I've got my patent secured, cap'n. I didn't leave without my papers; and the safe-lock trade is all right, sir."

"You won't care about that now, eh?"

"No? Why not?" asked Ned, wondering.

"This later discovery gives you a fortune without any farther trouble or toil, my boy."

"I was reared a mechanic, you know, captain, and I have given seven of the best years of my life to acquiring the locksmith's trade. I am greatly interested in this gentleman's story, but I shall stick to the lock anyhow, fortune or no fortune, sir."

"Bravo, my boy! That's just what I expected you would do."

"To be sure I shall."

And going to his travelling bag Ned drew forth his letters patent in triumph.

"There's the document, captain. I've worked for it, and I've got it. Now, who's afraid?"

"Good. Not Ned Corson, I'll be bound."

"No, sir. I've got the safe lock, my own invention and manufacture, Mr. Holland, that will beat the world, sir. Here are my letters patent for it, just issued."

And the young locksmith's apprentice that was, now "Edward Corson, Inventor," exhibited the handsomely engrossed and engraved parchment with laudable pride, notwithstanding the probability that he was also at that hour worth near a clear twenty thousand pounds by virtue of his relationship to the dead Edward Corson, of Strathavon.

Next day Mr. Holland made some business-like suggestions to Ned—always in the presence of Captain Blount—and they all sat down to talk over the subject of the young man's fortune once more.

"I observe, Master Edward—let me call you thus," said Holland, "that you are thoroughly engrossed in your affair of this lock-patent. But this estate I doubt not belongs to you. It is worth looking after, sir."

"Well, I think you're right there, Mr. Holland," said the captain, with emphasis.

"Oh, yes, of course," replied Ned. "But my safe-lock is a big thing, sir. There's a fortune in it I'm sure. All that I have now to do is to manipulate it rightly. I know, sir, what a lock is. I've got it. And I'm bound to put this lock into the market."

"That's right," said Holland.

"Now, sir—to proceed with the other matter I

hear that this property of my father's (if I am your Edward Corson's son) is valuable."

"Yes, it is."

"If I get possession of it, it must be done by proxy. I can't go after uncertainties with this certainty here to look to. Can anything be done in that way, sir? You are a lawyer."

"Yes," said Holland. "You can empower an attorney to act for you, after establishing your identity, legally, as the proper claimant and heir."

"Will you undertake this commission, sir?"

"Well, we will see. I think I will—by-and-by. I can't decide just now."

"Then I will arrange with you, whenever you deem it proper to act in my behalf—and I can afford, if you succeed, to remunerate you handsomely," said Ned, smiling. "I never knew my father. I have no recollection of a mother. I therefore have no particular sentiment to exhibit in this matter. It becomes a simple affair of business. If you can arrange it—go ahead. I'll pay you roundly for the trouble, and give you all the authority I possess to do for me as you would for yourself."

"That sounds like good common sense, Master Edward. I will look the matter over, procure the necessary official documents to prove your claim—and I will confer with you again, by-and-by, in reference to future proceedings."

"All right, Mr. Holland. Meantime we will become better acquainted with each other all round; and my staunch old friend here, Captain Blount, will join us in hoping that you may be able to carry out your plan to do me this grand service. If you cannot attend to it, I shall let it lie for the present. My new invention is to occupy my personal attention for the time being. I am determined to make that thing tell, sir."

Thus matters were left. Ned went about the prosecution of his long-contemplated design in earnest—and it was clear to both Holland and the captain that the fortunate heir had bank-and-safe-lock on the brain now.

"By the way, captain," asked Ned, "has Katrin heard of this reported good luck of mine?"

"Of course she has, my boy. It has been the town talk for two weeks. And the girls, some days ago, wrote her, congratulating her for you upon your accession to a fortune."

"Well, what does she say?"

"We've sent for her, Ned."

"Have you! Thanks. I shall be delighted."

"Of course. I knew that before. Her term isn't half out, but I fancy she won't go back to school again now."

"No? Why not?"

"She don't want to. You've got your patent secured, you've tumbled into a ready cash fortune, most likely that'll count up to twenty thousand pounds, my boy, by the time you get it in hand—and she don't care to be away from you longer, I reckon."

"When will Katy be here, captain?"

"Day after to-morrow."

"I must go back to town to-morrow—and I'll return next day," said Ned.

And in company with Mr. Holland the young man left the village next morning for London.

While in London Ned had a long conference with Mr. Holland, and arranged to meet that gentleman again at an early day.

"I am not indifferent," said Ned, "to this singular stroke of apparent good luck, Mr. Holland, but I am absorbed in my new enterprise. I deem this invention a triumph in the way of my calling; and I shall take pride in showing certain people in this country that 'some things can be done as well as others,' even by a poor mechanic, if he has the will, the talents, the brains and the principles of right as a foundation to work upon. I shall always stick to my trade, sir, if I had half a dozen fortunes tumble upon me! I love it. I have been reared to work, and I don't propose to lie down to sleep, or go into my shell, voluntarily, at my age, sir."

"All right, Master Edward. I applaud your good intention. Your father was much as you are now—at your age; a very industrious, ambitious man, I remember. I will look farther into your proposal, and we will meet again shortly."

Ned went back to the village next day. Mr. Holland proceeded to prepare certain necessary legal documents pertaining to Ned's case, within the next two weeks, and went down to Blount's in the course of the month to get duly certified copies of the old town records.

The necessary inquiries were instituted by Ned and the captain regarding Mr. Holland's reputation, and he was found to be commended as an honest and worthy man.

And at last it was decided that this lawyer should be duly empowered in form, by Ned, to proceed to take charge of the nice estate left him.

For his services, when the property was duly ac-

quired by Ned, he was to be well paid. He thought it would require six or eight months' time, perhaps a year, to get possession legally, and establish proof of the validity of Ned's claim.

Six or seven weeks after this discovery of the late parish-boy's good fortune Mr. Holland started on his mission.

Very naturally these exciting disclosures touching Ned's history and good luck were the topics of general conversation in the usually dull village, where he had been so long known as charity-boy and apprentice to the locksmith.

Katty Delorme, who was now known to be engaged to Ned, left the academy at this time and returned to Blount's house, where she met her "intended" joyously, and where she received the congratulations of everybody, for she was universally esteemed, as was also the young man to whom she was affianced.

Ned was overjoyed to meet Katrin again, and he was on the spot, when she came from school, to welcome her—Blount having insisted that young Corson should make his house his home for the present. Thus the lovers were brought together once more, and nobody could enjoy their evident felicity more intensely than did the jovial old mariner himself.

"I always said it, Katty," he observed to her one day. "I always knew that Ned Corson was a trump, and that he'd come out on the top in the end!"

"This last stroke of fortune is a grand one, to be sure," said Katrin. "But Neddy seems to care more for his lock invention, after all, than he does about this valuable property, said to be left by his father, in Scotland."

"I know it. He's completely wrapped up in his business, and declares that he'll make this invention tell, anyhow—fortune or no fortune."

"Well. If Ned's anticipations in this direction are not realized, he has an ample fortune in that safe lock, in any event," said Katrin. "He is very sanguine regarding the merits of his invention, and is thoroughly devoted to his profession."

"That is as it should be, and evinces the lad's sound good sense," replied the captain. "Ninety-nine out of a hundred young men, situated as he is, would have had their heads turned with the announcement of such good luck. But Ned's a brave, sensible young man, Katrin. He loves you as he does his life, and better. You're a fortunate girl to have secured his affections, and I shall look forward to your union with him with great pleasure."

"Ah, captain, he's a dear, good soul. I only regret that my pecuniary condition in life is so unequal to his fine prospects. I wish I were rich for Ned's sake sometimes, Captain Blount," said Katrin, with a sigh.

"Well, Ned's got enough for you both, surely, when he comes in possession of his patrimony; and if he don't get that I've no doubt he'll do well with his invention."

"I hope so, at all events. He's worked hard enough on that to deserve a fortune from it, if it is half as good as he believes it to be. And I suppose you know that he obtained some ideas from the old teak-wood chest-lock, which he improved upon when he was constructing his lock, and out of this and that he contrived what he now claims is such a treasure of a safe-lock."

"Ay, yes; I mind me of the old brown chest," said the captain. "What's become of it?"

"I have it safe. I shall never part with it. I took it to school with me and the girls laughed at the 'dingy old thing,' as they termed my trunk. But I remember that it came with me to my good preserver, your brother, when he found me, and it was undoubtedly my mother's. It is all safe, and has been very serviceable, though it is cumbersome. My kind old protector at the lighthouse used to say 'Take care of the old chest, Katty. It contained the whole of your fortune when you came into our hands, and I've no doubt it did; but they found only my mother's and a few of my small clothes in the chest.'"

"I've heard my brother tell of this often. I'm glad you have preserved the ancient box. I have never examined it, but they say it's a curious piece of workmanship of its kind."

"Rather so, but it has so many partings, and cubby-holes, and slides, and drawers, that it is handy, and I've found it very convenient."

"Where is it now?"

"In my room, upstairs."

"It's all safe, then?"

"Oh, yes; nobody ever troubles that rusty-looking old chest, to be sure. It isn't worth much any way, except for its associations, captain."

"Ay, I understand."

They were interrupted by a rap, and the door opened the same instant to admit old Luke Boissey, the locksmith, who "had run down from town for a

day or two's recreation," he said, in the village where he had spent so many years of his life.

"And Ned's fell into riches, they tell me," said his former crusty master, in a very unusual tone for him.

"He hasn't seen the colour of his money yet, and he won't for months," replied the captain; "but there's no question in our minds that he is the rightful heir, and it's a pretty sum to be sure if he gets it, as the lawyer says he will."

"Yes, I saw him; he called on me and told me the story," said Boissey. "Now, nine boys out of ten would ha' gone to the dogs lively conditioned as Ned was."

"That's so, Boissey."

"But I didn't eddicate him that way, you n' stand. I kept him in his place and taught him that he must work for his livin'."

"Yea, you looked out for that."

"Well, wasn't it the best way?"

"Perhaps so," said Blount, dryly.

"Perhaps? I know it was so. And you'll see if he don't profit by my example and the course I took with him. What is it about some new invention he's been getting up? I hear he's got a lock o' some kind, that's going to astonish the nations, Blount. Where did he learn to do that kind o' thing I'd like to know?"

"He's been hard at work some months on it, and went a little while ago about a patent for it I understand. I've never seen it, but his model is pronounced perfection," returned the captain, evasively.

"Well, what's his prospect for a patent I wonder?"

"Oh, he's got it."

"He has, eh? Well, he's a good workman, I always said that. He's an ingenious feller and a smart young man. I should like to have him with me. We miss him—very much. He can earn right good wages at his trade now. I'd like to give him a first-rate chance as foreman in my shop. But I s'pose he's too rich, in prospect at least, to go back to the bench ag'in—eh, sir?"

"He's pretty busy about the affair of the patent I think, now, Boissey," said Blount.

"I'd like to see his model," replied Boissey. "He's a tasty smith, and I've no doubt he'll do his old master credit by-and-by. I brought him up steady—he never'll regret that he served his time faithful with old Luke Boissey, I warrant. I must see his model. P'raps I could point out some improvement 'at could be made in it. He ain't had much experience in anything but reg'lar work, though; and I don't see how he got up a lock that's a new thing. You ain't seen it, Blount, you say?"

"No. And if I had I know nothing about locks, Boissey. I can sail a ship with the best of 'em I think. But this other kind o' mechanism I know nothing of. Those who are judges say, however, that it's a tip-top invention, and that it'll prove a fortune for Ned. An' I hope it will."

"I hope so too. Where is he?"

"He'll be here this evening."

"I'll come over ag'in. Ned's a good lad. I wish him well. I'd like to see his lock. I can give him good advice. I'll help him in my poor way, tell him. He's been well cared for in my employ. I've nothing to regret. I did my duty by him, and I'm glad he's turnin' out so well. This is the result o' discipline, cap'n. Keep 'em at it in the right way when they're young, and when they're old they won't go astray. That's my motto. I'll come over to-night. Tell Ned I want to see his invention, will you?"

"I'll tell him, Boissey. He hasn't showed it round much. But he's got his patent, an' he don't care about keepin' the matter still any longer, maybe."

"Yes, I see," concluded Boissey, retiring, thoughtfully—but seemingly never so agreeable in his life.

"What was the old fellow really after?" thought Blount.

When Ned returned the captain told him "Boissey was after him."

"Ah! What does he want?" asked Ned.

"He'd like to engage you, he says."

"When I want a job, and can't get it anywhere else, I may go to him for it. But I'm doing very well just now, thank you."

"He's coming over this evening to see your new invention, Ned," said the captain. "Is it here?"

"Yes—the finished lock is. The model is left in London."

"Will you show it to him?"

"I will, if I agree to," said Ned, with a smirk. "I don't think anybody'll see that lock at present. I've arranged to-day with Powers & Small, one of the leading bank-safe makers in town, to put this sample lock upon one of their mammoth safes, at once."

"And then?" queried Blount.

"This safe is to be contributed by this firm to the exhibition of the 'Institute of Mechanics and the

Arts' shortly; and my invention will thus be brought into competition with the best-known locks in the country. We shall see what then," said Ned confidently.

"A rare good opportunity, Ned."

"Yes, indeed! The safe itself is a fine sample of the best workmanship of this notable house. I called on them a week ago, and exhibited my lock, which I explained to them. They were delighted with it, and complimented me in rare terms upon what they were pleased to call my 'splendid achievement.' They put the safe into this exhibition, and I formally contribute the lock, as a sample of 'Corson's Patent Improved Burglar-proof Safe-lock,' with a view to gaining the society's grand gold medal. If I succeed, it will prove a very good opportunity, and a very respectable beginning for the locksmith's apprentice, I apprehend."

"That's so, my boy," said the captain.

"Boissey has heard of this. Powers & Small are his customers," continued Ned. "I did a deal of work for them while I was with Boissey."

"I thought he was unusually agreeable, to-day."

"Oh, indeed!" said Ned, laughing. "And that's what's the matter with Master Luke Boissey, sir. He will see my invention at the institute—not elsewhere, captain."

"Exactly. You're managing it nicely, my boy."

"I intend to do so," concluded the locksmith.

And thus Ned had arranged to show his first completed safe-lock to the world.

He spent a week personally supervising the attachment of his invention to the Powers & Small safe. And when it was ready to be sent to the exhibition the firm said they supposed that Mr. Corson did not care to have it exposed, and tendered him the key of the room where it stood, with the new Corson lock affixed to it. Ned smiled and replied, as he threw the door of the safe inward, at last, and made a pass or two over the front of the huge square iron box:

"You may leave it where it is, gentlemen. I have locked your safe. Here is the key. If any of you or your friends can contrive to open it, without my assistance now, you are welcome to all you can learn by the exposure! Good-day; I shall look in on you at the exhibition."

And with this he departed.

"Nobody" contrived "to open" that safe—and it was duly deposited, a few days afterward, with half a hundred others from different makers—to compete with a dozen of the best safe-locks then current in the world.

Now Ned's invention succeeded we shall learn shortly. But the young locksmith felt very easy in his boots about this time.

Old Boissey came according to appointment, and made himself very agreeable to his late apprentice, as he had done previously to Blount.

But he did not see Ned's safe-lock until he examined it, with ten thousand other admirers, at the exhibition.

(To be continued.)

## FACETIAE

Mexico is said to be like the earth, because it has a revolution every twenty-four hours.

The Ohio river has a remarkably long face. It is twelve hundred miles from its head to its mouth.

REASSURING.—A young lady fainted when told that over 500,000 men died last year, but was revived by the information that there were 13,000,000 left.

QUESTION?—Mrs. Malaprop desires to know whether the big statue adorning Hyde Park Corner is included in the law list of "Statues at Large"?

A LIVERPOOL paper tells of a skipper of that port who thinks it is curious that such a little thing as a barometer "should influence the weather."

THE American young ladies having, it is said, decided that squinting shall be the fashion this winter, are now laboriously cultivating a peculiarly fascinating inversion of the eyes.

A MAN was boasting that he had been married twenty years and had never given his wife a cross word. Those who know say he didn't dare to; but he never mentioned it.

WEIGHT A BIT!

Stout Party: "What! two shillings! why, it's only a few yards, really."

Cabby: "Vy, yes, so 'tis;—but it's only a penny a stone then!"—*Fun.*

A PROFITABLE BUSINESS.

Sharp Newsboy: "Now, master, a big 'un, a hot 'un, and one o' the right kidney, well done, crisp skin, plenty o' butter, trade allowance, and discount off for ready money."—*Fun.*

CONFORMITY.—"If you want to see what men will



do in the way of conformity," says a modern philosopher, "take a European hat for your subject of meditation. I daresay there are twenty-two millions of people at this minute, each wearing one of these hats to please the rest."

**SYMPATHY.**—"My brudders," said a waggish coloured man to a crowd, "in all affliction, in all ob your troubles, dar is one place you can always find sympathy." "What? what?" shouted several, "In de dictionary," he replied, rolling his eyes skyward.

**SOMETHING BRIGHT IN THE FUTURE.**—Materfamilias, still mourning over her coal merchant's account is most anxious that Parliament should not be dissolved before it has passed "the Fires Bill," which she was glad to see had been found so interesting by the House of Commons that they read it a second time.—*Punch.*

**A STRANGE RECEPTION.**—A lady who recently made a call upon one of her most fashionable friends, was somewhat astonished by the servant, a new importation, replying to her inquiry if the mistress of the house was at home, "Well, laddy, dunnow, but yo can give me yer ticket (card), an' I'll see if they'll be lettin' yer come into the parlours."

**Too MUCH TO EXPECT.**—"What do you call that?" indignantly asked a customer, pointing out an object that he had discovered in his soup. "Wrist-band, with a sleeve-button attached, sir," said the waiter, briskly. "Well, do you consider that a proper thing for a man to find in his soup?" asked the customer, in wrath. The waiter quietly replied, "Well, sir, would you expect to find a two-guinea silk umbrella in a shilling plate of soup?"

**"SIX OF ONE AND HALF A DOZEN OF THE OTHER."**  
*Cheerful Party:* "Hallo, Brown! You look down the mouth, old lad! What's the matter?"

*Depressed Party:* "Oh, beausy cold id the head—"

*Cheerful Party:* "Ah! That cubs froblivid id that edervatig hole, South Kedaigot! Why dolt you cub ad live id St. Jed's Wood, as we do?"—*Punch.*

**"HOIST WITH HIS OWN PETARD."**—An American gentleman in the centre of the room of a London club aired for the general benefit his disbelief in Shakespeare, and in some extraordinary manner was comparing him with Edgar Allan Poe, asserting that he could mention a hundred things upon which Shakespeare had said nothing. "Do so," was the response. At once the American gentleman replied, "The treadmill." "What do you say to this?" said a patron of Shakespeare, "Down, down, thou climbing sorrow?" "Isn't that very treadmillish?"

**ANECDOTE OF BARON CHANNELL.**—The death of Baron Channell has revived an anecdote of his practice at the bar. His lordship was always regarded as a man of sound legal learning, and very considerable general erudition, but he was, at the same time, remarkable for his utter disregard of the unfortunate letter H. Being engaged in a commercial suit, in which the ship "Harrow" was the bone of contention, the judge expressed a wish to know what was really the name of the vessel. "Was she," he asked, "the 'Harrow' or the 'Arrow'?" "My lord," replied Mr. Channell's witty but disrespectful junior, "when the ship is at sea she is known as the 'Harrow,' but when she gets into the chops of the Channell she becomes the 'Arrow.'"

**PREPARED FOR THE WORST.**—A country clergyman, of middle age, unquestionable antecedents and professional appearance, found himself in a railway carriage with two maiden ladies, long past the bloom of youth. There were no lamps in the carriage, and the ladies appeared very apprehensive in the matter of tunnels. At length the train plunged into darkness when the clerical passenger was horrified to find that one of his fellow travellers suddenly turned a bull's-eye lantern upon him. "You w ill excuse us," said the female with the bull's-eye, "but, although you appear to be very respectable, still there are so many wolves in sheep's clothing going about that whenever we get into tunnels we prepare for the worst." The terrified parson left the carriage at the first opportunity.

**A WOMAN'S QUESTION.**—Is it really illegal for British subjects to wear foreign decorations? If so, the law in this respect, if enforced, would deprive women of a right which they probably value more than all the other rights they claim, or which are claimed for them, put together. What is a chignon but a foreign decoration; indeed, what feminine decoration can be named that is of native origin? All the fashions are imported from Paris; not a fringe, trimming, feather, flower, or bow, but is of French origin; much of the false hair probably comes from foreign prisons and hospitals. The rights of women are not so far recognised abroad as to render them eligible for orders of nobility and knighthood; but there are still foreign crosses and ribbons which

they have hitherto been wont to decorate themselves withal in profusion without let or hindrance, but would have to discard them all immediately if there existed a law which forbade them from wearing foreign decorations under penalty of fine or imprisonment.—*Punch.*

**A LOST SOVEREIGN.**—A certain corridor of the House of Commons has posted up in it at the present moment a notice which calls forth a good deal of wit. It appears that a Mr. ——— lost a sovereign somewhere in the House, and he thought that the best plan was to advertise the fact, consequently the notice in question was put up, and in its original form ran thus:—"Lost, a sovereign. If found, Mr. ——— will be gratified if it is left with Mr. ———." The second edition of the notice contained the heading, "A Sad Case," and the word *bad* was introduced before "sovereign." In the next edition a conundrum was added—"Why is Mr. ——— like Spain? Answer: Because he's lost his sovereign." To which some satirical wag added the words, "Incorrect, for Spain threw the sovereign away." The last amendment up to the date on the notice is to the effect that 30s. reward is offered for the recovery of the "bad" sovereign.

### "DON'T CARE."

"DON'T CARE!"—a foolish watchword

That leads to sin and shame,  
That brings dishonour to the man  
Who links it with his name.

It is a treacherous beacon  
Upon life's stormy shore,  
A light that leads to wretchedness,  
Where joy is known no more.

"Don't care!" Oh, reckless mortal!

Take back the thoughtless words,  
While there are days all beautiful  
With trees and singing birds,  
With skies enrobed in sunshine,  
And merry, laughing rills,  
And forests standing tall and grand  
Upon the sunny hills.

Take back the words, and never

Give voice to them again;

They lead to woe and ruin dire,

To deep remorse and pain.

If life were only folly,

If hope were but a cheat,

If hearts were only selfishness,

All promises deceit,

"Don't care!" might be our motto;

But while this life is true,

While honour lives and virtue thrives,

And there is work to do,

You must not be regardless

Of all that's good and pure,

If you would win the prize of peace,

And make your joy secure.

To care to do your duty,

To care to do your best;

To care to think that life is more

Than pleasure, more than jest;

To care to gain the friendship

Of men who've won the prize

Of fortune wrought by labour's hands

And noble energies;

To care for good opinion,

And court its truthful praise,

And live so that the light of joy

Shall ever bless your days—

This is your duty, brother,

As it is also mine,

To care for all things good on earth,

And all that are divine.

C. D.

### GEMS.

CANDOUR consists in giving a fair and deliberate hearing to opinions, statements, and arguments, and weighing fairly and honestly their tendency. It is, therefore, opposed to prejudice, blind attachment to preconceived opinions, and that narrow, disputatious spirit which delights in captious criticism, and will hear nothing with calmness that is opposed to its own views—which distorts or misrepresents the sentiments of its opponents, ascribing them to unworthy motives, or deducing from them conclusions which they do not warrant. Candour, accordingly, may be considered as a compound of justice and the love of truth.

**LOVE,** said the other graces in this world, is like a cathedral tower, which begins on the earth, and, at first, is surrounded by the other parts of the structure. But, at length, rising above the buttressed wall, and arch, and parapet, and pinnacle, it shoots, spire-like, many a foot right into the air, so high that the huge cross on its summit glows like a spark in the

morning light, and shines like a star in the evening sky, when the rest of the pile is enveloped in darkness. So love, here, is surrounded by the other graces, and divides the honours with them, but they will have felt the warp of night and of darkness, while it will shine, luminous, against the sky of eternity.

### HOUSEHOLD TREASURES.

**FRICTION MATCHES** often throw out a disagreeable, unhealthy odour. Families can make a safe and almost odourless match for themselves, at a very trifling cost, thus: mix together thirty-four parts of phosphorus; fifty parts of nitrate of potash; twenty-six parts of chlorate of potash; forty-eight parts of red lead; and forty-two parts of best glue.

**KEEPING GRAPES.**—A simple system—one which has succeeded exceedingly well—is, first to have your grapes well ripened; this is greatly important to their long keeping; and then, having a good dry, well-ventilated fruit or seed room, procure some ordinary soda-water bottles, one for each bunch, which fix in a rack in some way at an angle of about 45 deg., so that the neck of the bottles may project some little way from the shelf or rack. Fill these bottles with clear water, and place a little piece of charcoal in each. Cut your grapes, leaving six inches of wood, or more, at either end; place the end of each spur with the bunch on into the neck of the bottles, one in each, and fix them so as to keep them from moving with a piece of cork. Keep the temperature of the room at about 40 deg., with a dry atmosphere, and as much as possible in the dark—in fact, in such a condition as is most favourable to the keeping of apples and pears. Examine them frequently as you would if they were on the vines. Well-ripened grapes may be kept thus for months.

### STATISTICS.

**STEAM-ENGINES.**—The exports of steam-engines from the United Kingdom sensibly increased last year, the value of the exports (which include locomotives as well as fixed engines) having risen to 2,603,390*l.*, as compared with 2,064,004*l.* in 1871, and 1,997,533*l.* in 1870. The three principal external outlets for our steam-engines are Russia, Egypt, and British India. The exports to Russia were valued last year at 302,176*l.*, against 350,758*l.* in 1871, and 457,074*l.* in 1870; those to Egypt at 242,122*l.*, against 348,074*l.* in 1871, and 234,332*l.* in 1870; and those to British India at 173,003*l.*, against 210,251*l.* in 1871, and 96,327*l.* in 1870. The value of the steam-engines exported from the United Kingdom in the fifteen years ending with 1872 inclusive was as annexed: 1853 1,097,279*l.*, 1859 973,340*l.*, 1860 1,238,333*l.*, 1861 1,258,164*l.*, 1862 1,624,876*l.*, 1863 1,595,036*l.*, 1864 1,617,117*l.*, 1865 1,958,533*l.*, 1866 1,760,612*l.*, 1867 2,026,072*l.*, 1868 1,724,733*l.*, 1869 1,851,779*l.*, 1870 1,997,533*l.*, 1871 2,064,004*l.*, and 1872 2,603,390*l.*

### MISCELLANEOUS.

The Wimbledon meeting will commence this year on July 7th.

It is said that the will of the late Emperor Napoleon has been proved at 120,000*l.*, personal property. It is left without reserve to the empress. To his son he bequeaths his crown.

The engagement of the Duke of Edinburgh to the Grand Duchess Maria, daughter of the Czar, will be made public from Sorrento shortly after the empress's arrival in that place, and the betrothed couple will meet there.

A COUPLE living at Mollis, Canton Glarus, Switzerland, celebrated their diamond wedding on the 25th February, sixty years after their marriage in the church of that place. The husband is 86 and the wife 82 years of age. Both are still hale and hearty.

**OYSTERS.**—There are good times in store for oyster eaters. A new bed has been discovered between Fleetwood and Whitehaven of almost exhaustless dimensions, being calculated to cover 800 square miles, the oysters lying two or three feet deep. The fish is said to be remarkably fine and well fed and of a delicate flavour, though the outside shell appears to be somewhat large and rough. Near Fleetwood the oysters sell at 2s. per score.

**VENETIAN GLASS.**—The manufacture of beads is said to be threatened by the advance of civilization amongst barbarous nations, where until now they have found extensive markets. It is suggested that great efforts ought to be made to obtain a reduction of import duties on beads in British India and in Egypt. The approaching abolition of the free port of Venice will, it is thought, be very beneficial to the glass trade generally, though its effect upon the bead manufacture in particular will not be much felt.

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## NOTICES TO CORRESPONDENTS.

**A MERCHANTMAN.**—The arrangement is peculiarly arbitrary and depends on the company.

**THE FAIR HAIRIED ONE.**—Capable of considerable improvement—easily attained by practice.

**GASTOE DE FOIX.**—Consult any platemaker's advertisement. The price is about five shillings per ounce—five shillings for manufactured silver.

**ROBERT TWEEDY** (Northallerton).—We regret that you cancelled your indentures. You had now better consult some one engaged in the service.

**WENTWORTH.**—If you will apply in the usual, ordinary, and accustomed manner, according to the correspondence column, all will be duly arranged.

**D. D. D.**—When they are external, or can be reached, one or two applications of the extract of lead, with an occasional dose of lenitive electuary, will generally succeed in curing them.

**JULIA W.**—1. Take the teeth to another dentist and ask him if he can arrange them for your use. 2. Good, but might be improved. 3. Quite allowable to return the call. 4. Order a good one from your bookseller.

**A POON MAN.**—A sheet of finely perforated zinc, substituted for a pane of glass in one of the upper squares of a chamber window is the cheapest and also the best form of ventilator.

**MARGUERITE.**—1. What is the meaning of matrimony in the face? There is no such an expression. Could we say that a person had old-maidishness in the face? Certainly not; except in so far as the face often naturally indicates alike our thoughts and our condition. 2. Apply to persons so engaged.

**R. O. L.**—The gazetteers give only the distances between Yarmouth and London. The measurement would be a local one, and you might as well ask the distance between two villages in Sligo and Tipperary. Some slight notion—only a slight one, however—might be got by consulting a map, constructed on a large scale for mileage.

**A DEPOSITOR.**—The arrangement is wholly an arbitrary one. The sum, however, is not thirty but really twenty-five pounds. It rests altogether on the absolute disposition of an absolute government. The advanced Radicals are already in open revolt. There is mutiny in the camp, and the electors of England are fully competent to justify their independence.

**TYRO.**—Your songs for the opening of the Workman's Hall show ability and do you real credit. With their spirit, moreover, we deeply sympathize. The verse, free and fluent, shows you able yet to do something that shall endure criticism. But you want a little more study. Count the number of accented syllables in the lines and you will soon find several errors. Care and study would soon rectify that.

**T. L. R.**—1. The gentleman unquestionably acts as the lady's escort, and he, by consequence, takes charge of both tickets. Therefore the tickets would be procured by him and retained for the great occasion. 2. We presume the gentleman to obtain them; otherwise, for the lady to do so would be strictly in accordance with good manners. Besides, a well-bred man would never be very hard towards a lady, or indeed towards any woman. Usually the gentleman would present the tickets for both.

**A. L. B.**—1. We sympathize with your condition of perplexity, and the more so as your case is complicated. In such a case it would be best by far to consult a respectable solicitor, acquainting him fully with the facts. 2. The handwriting might speedily and easily be improved by practice (as we advise you to do), but it seems, in our judgment, quite good enough for the position you are seeking. By the way we presume you would be able to look out or have friends who would look out for a situation in Bristol. Meanwhile, don't fret.

**H. S.**—Legal, most certainly. The fact that it is not mentioned among the forbidden degrees of affinity—mentioned by yourself as being in the list in the Book of Common Prayer, adequately establishes its complete legality. By the way in some old rustic churches those tables of affinity used to be placed in gilt letters on massive tablets alongside of the Creed and the Ten Commandments. The intention in those days was, perhaps, laudable. Still, a man was at no time very much likely to marry, say, his grandmother—a singular step sternly prohibited in the lists you mention.

**W. S.**—1. We cannot do so, nor could you acquire proficiency or even initiation by means of any printed directions; you would have to receive instruction from some proficient in that line of life—it is neither strictly a business nor a profession—and there are always many travelling about the country. You will, however, find a good

deal of general information, interesting in its way, in the popular novel called *Valentine Vox*. 2. It is not necessarily injurious to the lungs, if the lungs are of the average strength. Still we could not honestly recommend you to adopt such a career.

**BLACK CURRANT JAM.**—Everything depends upon the precise disposition of the lady in question; for example, whether she is reticent and retiring, or genial, graceful, and communicative. However, we will do our best. Say nothing about your knowledge of the correspondence, else she might imagine you had been intruding into her affairs, and that could do you no good. Be very exceedingly affectionate in your manner, and you have all opportunity, as you now so pleasantly have arrived at the agreeable period of walking out together, and when you think her humour is at its best, and she is most favourable, make a frank and manly avowal of your love.

**ONE IN A FIX.**—The fix in question is a terrible but also an ancient one, and it has been shared by thousands. You love the youngest, and the youngest loves another. Well—as all's fair in love and war, we presume—you rather pardonably desire to supplant your luckier rival. To do so you must be more assiduous than he is in all the myriad artifices and devices of love. Be very attentive, very loving, very energetic—do all in your power—and, of all things, get into the lady's society as often as you can. Remember also that, in *Faust*, Goethe represents Marguerite as having been won by a splendid necklace; work *sup.* Apparently you have one great advantage in being on the spot. The rival is not.

## DON'T RUN IN DEBT.

Beware—beware of debt,  
Pay down for what you get,  
Your clothes are not in style,  
But wear them yet awhile;  
With brush and needle you  
Can make them "good as new."  
The head, and not the hat,  
The heart, not the cravat,  
Makes a success of life  
For husband, child and wife.

Debt is a frightful ghost  
Which haunts us when we most  
Desire sweet peace to reign  
Within the mind's domain.  
The floor seems bare and cold,  
The furniture is old;  
But sweet is sleep on straw—  
Where comes no fear of law,  
And the disconcerting fun  
For debts that should not run.

Don't run in debt—beware!  
It is a trap, a snare;  
Let fashion put on airs,  
You shun its whims and cares.  
Fine feathers sometimes make  
Fine birds, sometimes they break  
The wings in which they're worn,  
Then drooping, soiled and torn,  
The bird in sorrow lies  
Under un pitying skies.

The debtor is a slave;  
Many a man that's brave  
Faints, trembles when he meets  
His neighbour in the streets.  
When notes are "coming due"  
What will become of you?  
Unless you meet the bill  
You are a debtor still!

Oh, be an honest man;  
Earn all you fairly can,  
And spend less than you earn.  
Have foresight to discern  
That he alone is free  
Who scorns the luxury  
That tempts men to forget  
The penalties of debt;  
For even graves of gold  
Will canker hearts they hold! G. W. B.

**ANNE**, nineteen, middle height, loving, and would make a good wife. Respondent must be tall, and dark; a mechanic preferred.

**LIZZIE W.**, twenty-six, dark, and very pleasing. Respondent must be tall, dark, and fond of home; a mechanic preferred.

**EIT**, twenty-one, rather tall, fair complexion, loving, and a domestic servant. Respondent must be tall, dark complexion, and of a loving disposition.

**POLLY**, nineteen, medium height, fair complexion, loving, and a housemaid. Respondent must be tall, dark complexion, fond of home, and of a loving disposition.

**FAITH**, fair, medium height, light curly hair, pretty, and fond of music. Respondent must be tall, fair, and able to keep a wife comfortably.

**HORR**, tall, fair, considered handsome, and fond of music. Respondent must be tall, dark, handsome, and in a good position.

**M. B.**, twenty, medium height, fair hair, blue eyes, and fair complexion. Respondent must be of a loving disposition, and fond of home; a sailor preferred.

**M. J. L.**, seventeen, tall, fair, pretty, light hair, blue eyes, loving, and domesticated. Respondent must be fair, loving, and fond of home.

**FRED**, twenty-two, dark, good looking, and of a loving disposition. Respondent must be well educated, pretty, loving, and domesticated.

**HUGH D.**, twenty, dark, medium height, and handsome. Respondent must be about nineteen, of a loving disposition, and domesticated.

**NED C.**, twenty-three, considered handsome, and loving. Respondent must be about eighteen, pretty, and domesticated.

**JULIA**, twenty-one, medium height, fair, loving, and domesticated. Respondent must be about twenty-three, dark complexion, blue eyes, and fond of home; a mechanic preferred.

**ADA T.**, nineteen, medium height, dark-brown hair, blue eyes, wishes to correspond with a gentleman not

more than twenty-two, loving, steady, and able to keep a wife comfortably.

**EDWARD S.**, twenty-three, medium height, dark hair, hazel eyes, good tempered, and fond of home, wishes to correspond with a young lady about his own age, and well educated.

**ELLEN**, twenty-four, tall, fair complexion, dark brown hair, hazel eyes, good tempered, and loving. Respondent must be dark, of a loving disposition, and fond of home and children.

**W. G.**, twenty-five, 5ft. 6in., fair complexion, blue eyes, light hair, has a moderate income. Respondent must be about twenty, considered pretty, loving, and thoroughly domesticated.

**FANNY**, twenty-one, medium height, light-brown hair, dark-blue eyes, and of a loving disposition, and good tempered. Respondent must be tall, dark, about twenty, and loving.

**WILLIAM C.**, twenty-eight, black hair, dark complexion, and brown eyes. Respondent must be about twenty-two, pretty, of a loving disposition, fond of music, and domesticated.

**MARIA**, eighteen, medium height, dark hair, blue eyes, good looking, and domesticated. Respondent must be about twenty-three, tall, handsome, and fond of home and children.

**F. B.**, twenty-three, 5ft. 7in., fair complexion, auburn hair, hazel eyes, of an affectionate disposition, and fond of home. Respondent must be about his own age, good tempered, and domesticated.

**MAGGIE M.**, twenty-eight, tall, fair, considered a good figure, in a milk business, has a small income, and able to make a home comfortable. Respondent must be tall and dark.

**QUIET WILLIE**, twenty, medium height, fair, and of retired habits. Respondent must be homely and quiet, not more than seventeen or eighteen, and appearance a minor consideration.

**W. T.**, twenty, 5ft. 6in., fair complexion, and gray eyes, wishes to correspond with a young lady about eighteen, dark hair, loving, and good looking; a domestic servant preferred.

**W. G. T.**, twenty, 5ft. 5in., dark complexion, black frizzy hair, dark-blue eyes, good tempered, and fond of home. Respondent must be about seventeen, dark complexion, loving, musical, domesticated, and have a small income.

**BASHFUL HARRY**, twenty-one, medium height, brown curly hair, blue eyes, handsome, loving, fond of home, and would make a good husband. Respondent must be about nineteen, pretty, loving, and thoroughly domesticated.

## COMMUNICATIONS RECEIVED:

**CAPTAIN B. H.** is responded to by—"K. B.", twenty-seven, 5ft., fair complexion, blue eyes, considered pretty, of a loving disposition, and fond of home.

**SHEET ANCHOR JACK** by—"Henrietta W.", who thinks she is all that "Jack" requires.

**TOM ROYAL** by—"Laughing Lizzie", eighteen, pretty, and well educated.

**JENNIE B.** by—"W. J. P.", 5ft. 7in., fair, handsome, and fond of home.

**BLANCHE** by—"A Very Loving One", who thinks he would fulfil her description.

**EDGAR H.** by—"Lavinia", who thinks she is all he desires.

**ALFRED W.** by—"The Fair-Haired One", seventeen, tall, fair, and pretty.

**SUSAN E.** by—"W. T. P.", a seaman in the Royal Navy, affectionate, and fond of home and children.

**COLONIAL** by—"Sarah", twenty-three, dark eyes and hair, fair complexion, and a domestic servant.

**ALFRED D.** by—"Blue Eyed Annie", twenty-one, and a housemaid.

**BEN STATHAIL** by—"Annie", twenty-one, tall, dark, good looking, and a teetotaler.

**THOMAS** by—"Nellie", who answers in every way to his description.

**J. C. T.** by—"Agnes", who believes she is everything that he desires.

**LOVING MINNIE** by—"Arthur", nineteen, 5ft. 5in., fair, considered handsome, and has very bright prospects.

**JACK** by—"S. H.", twenty, fair complexion, dark eyes, brown hair, and considered handsome.

**BARNET BUNTINE** by—"Silly", twenty, dark, handsome, affectionate, and of a loving disposition.

**W. M.**, thirty-six, rather short, and fond of home and children. Respondent must be about thirty; a domestic servant preferred.

**WILLIE H. B.** by—"Polly", seventeen, tall, good looking, loving, dark-brown eyes, auburn hair, musical, and domesticated.

**JACK'S AWAY** by—"Fair Rosamond", twenty, 5ft., fair, and considered pretty, but has only a loving heart and willing hands to offer.

**LOUIS C.** by—"Thistle", who holds a good position in a large Scotch Co. in London, 5ft. 5in., nineteen, hair light-brown and curly, features homely, but heart warm.

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